

ADRIAN ROGERS

# LEGACY

COLLECTION



## ZECHARIAH

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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# The Guilt Trap

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 22, 1991

**Main Scripture Text:** Zechariah 3:1–4

*“Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.”*

ZECHARIAH 3:3

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Stark Actuality of Guilt
- II. The Satanic Accusation in Guilt
- III. The Savior’s Advocacy for Our Guilt

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word now and look in Zechariah chapter 3—Zechariah chapter 3? Last week, we talked to you about the blame game. “Everything I do wrong is somebody else’s fault,” we like to say. And we don’t want to accept the responsibility for what we’ve done. But every road has two ditches. And the devil doesn’t care which ditch—on the right-hand or the left-hand—that you drive off into, as long as you stay off God’s highway of holiness. So on one side of that road is the blame game; on the other side of that road is the guilt trap. And that’s what I want to talk to you about today: “The Guilt Trap,” because there are certain individuals who don’t play the game, the blame game. They’re not shoving the blame off on other people. These people are caught in a trap that I want to call *the guilt trap*. They’re haunted by the ghost of guilt.

There’s a legend that says, after Pontius Pilate had adjudicated Jesus Christ worthy of crucifixion, he tried to wash his lily-white politician’s hands in a basin. Then, he went back to Rome to report to the Emperor what he had done. And then, he went to Switzerland—just outside of what is now called Lucerne—went up to a tall mountain; and there, filled with grief, and remorse, and guilt, he jumped from that mountain to his death. You go to Lucerne today, and you can visit that mountain—it’s called Mount Pilatus, named for Pilate. And the legend says that up there on that mountaintop, if you listen, you can hear the ghost of Pilate, moaning, and groaning, and trying to wash his hands from the guilt of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Now Mount Pilatus is a very real mountain, but that’s a legend. Whether he committed suicide there, I know not. I doubt,

very seriously, that there is any ghost of Pilate that is there. But I'll tell you this much: There are many in this congregation, today, and many of those of you who are listening to me wherever you may be, who are haunted by another ghost that I want to call the ghost of guilt. You're caught in the guilt trap.

You know, we Americans are strange people. We've gotten rid of sin—that is, we've relabeled *sin* “psychological maladjustment,” or whatever. We've gotten rid of sin; but my friend, we have not gotten rid of guilt. With all of that in mind, look here, in Zechariah chapter 3, verse 1—here's a vision that Zechariah had: *“And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.”* Now here's God's high priest—and, by the way, all of us have been made a kingdom of priests—and Satan, whose name means “adversary,” is resisting Him: *“And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment”* (Zechariah 3:1–4).

Now there are many truths that are in these few verses that I've just read to you. But there are three that I really want to point out to you, this morning, and I pray God that He will etch them in your mind, and rivet them upon your consciousness, this morning.

## I. The Stark Actuality of Guilt

First of all is what I want to call the stark actuality of guilt—the stark actuality of guilt. In verse 3, you'll find Joshua, the high priest, and he's clothed with a filthy garment (Zechariah 3:3). Now the entire picture here is that of a courtroom. God, in His holiness, the chief justice of the Supreme Court of the universe, is there, upon His throne. Before Him is Joshua, and Joshua is clothed in a filthy garment. Now there's one thing about a priest's garment: it was to be of linen, and spotlessly white. But here, it's horribly filthy. And Satan is there. Joshua is in the prisoner's dock; he is the accused. And Satan is there, and Satan is the prosecuting attorney. He is pointing out the filthiness of Joshua. He is the adversary, and He is saying to God, “On the basis of Your so-called holiness, God, You've got to judge this one, because of his filth.”

Now that's the picture that we have there. And may I tell you, dear friend, it's one of the many visions in the Old Testament that teach us what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, and what we learned about in the music today, where Jesus nailed our sins to His cross. And you keep listening, and you'll find out that that is true.

Now as we look at this picture, it seems as though the prosecuting attorney, Satan, has a good case against Joshua; because, he's standing there, and Joshua, the high

priest, has absolutely no defense, because he is guilty. And friend, nobody ever is able to deal with their sin until he himself admits that he, too, is guilty. Put in your margin Romans chapter 3 and verse 19. Here's what Romans chapter 3 and verse 19 says: "*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God*" (Romans 3:19). Every mouth stopped! Do you know what Romans 3:19 is saying? "Shut up and plead guilty. Shut up and plead guilty, that every mouth shall be stopped. All the world is guilty before God." That's Bible doctrine, friend. But today, we don't like to discuss guilt too much.

Just what is *guilt*? If you were to ask the average person, "What is guilt?" he would say that guilt is the feeling that you get when you do something that you know to be wrong. But that is not guilt; that is guilt feeling. And the problem with Americans today is that they don't know the difference between *guilt* and *guilt feelings*.

Let me illustrate: If you put your hand on a red-hot stove, and the flesh is seared and burned, a message is going to travel up your arm to your brain, and you're going to feel excruciating pain. Now the pain is the burn feeling; the burn is here. Now my dear friend, there is a difference between *guilt* and *guilt feeling*. Guilt feeling is not guilt. It's very real, and it has to be dealt with. But the problem, dear friend, is the burn on the hand.

Now the reason I want to say this is this: that many people try to deal with guilt by dealing with their conscience. They just simply have the idea that it's your conscience that makes you feel guilty; and therefore, if you deal with your conscience, you'll be all right.

Your conscience, however, is very much like a thermostat; it operates wherever it's set. Therefore, you can't let your conscience be your guide, unless God guides your conscience. God has to set your conscience.

Elizabeth Elliot, who has spoken here in our church, and whose husband was killed by the Auca Indians—and she herself went to live with those who had murdered her own husband—she told that those Auca Indians there were stark-naked savages. I mean, they ran through the jungle without wearing any clothes, except they always had a string tied around their waist—just a string around their waist; stark-naked savages with a string around their waist. One day, her curiosity overcame her, and she said, "Why do you wear that string around your waist?" They said, "Why? Why, if we didn't wear this, we'd be naked." I mean, they didn't want to run around naked, so they wore a string around their waist; and therefore, their conscience approved that, and they said, "We're not naked now, because we are dressed." But you see, that's where their conscience was set. Conscience is like a thermostat. Sometimes, you can think you're not guilty when you are guilty; and sometimes, you can think you're guilty when you're

not guilty.

Little children, precious little children, sometimes go around feeling guilty because they have been sexually abused. Isn't that true? They have been sexually abused, and they grow up feeling dirty—precious little children. Sometimes, mom and dad will get a divorce, or sometimes just argue, and the little child goes upstairs, and buries his face in his hands, and cries. And the child feels so guilty, because mom and dad have done what they've done. That's not guilt at all. But that little child cannot separate that; and sometimes, the child feels guilty.

May I tell you, dear friend, that guilt is not a feeling; it is a reality. It is the transgression of the law of God that brings judgment, not only to come, but it brings a lot of emotional baggage with it, right now. Anxiety and depression are guilt feelings that come from actual guilt. *The windows of the soul are covered with the grime of guilt.* What an outlook so many have! Physical health deteriorates in many, because of guilt. Guilt is to the soul what sand is to machinery. Spiritual sterility comes, sometimes, because of guilt. And there are some in this congregation who will not be here, unless you get help, two or three weeks from now, because the devil keeps telling you, "You are no good. You are a hypocrite. You are guilty. You don't belong there. You're just playing the game. Why don't you get out of church?" After a while, you will; because, guilt not only has eroded your happiness—clouded your outlook—but guilt has so condemned you, that you just feel like quitting. You're in a trap—the guilt trap.

How do people try to deal with guilt? A great many of them will go the psychiatrist or to the psychologist. We have some psychiatrists in our church, and some psychologists. I respect them, and I thank God for their learning, for their study, for their kindness, and their help; but, you listen to me, big, and plain, and straight, and never forget it. There is not one psychologist who can deal with your guilt—not one, unless he points you to Jesus Christ. Psychiatrists can only deal with the guilt feeling, but the psychiatrist cannot deal with the guilt.

Now what if he's an ungodly psychiatrist? And not all of them are; but, he may say, "Well, it's because you believe in God, and those onerous rules that you are breaking. Now what you probably need to do is to get rid of this belief in God, so you won't feel that you are incriminated in His sight; and therefore, you won't feel this way anymore." Do you see what he's doing? He's trying to remove the feeling. He's trying to teach you how to put your hand on a hot stove, and give you an aspirin, or a sedative, or whatever it is. Now he doesn't necessarily encourage you to put your hand on the stove, but he says, "If you've done it, what we've got to do is to kill the pain that you feel." He can't deal with this.

Every now and then, somebody says, "Well, what you need to do is to forgive yourself. Oh, you just need to be affirmed. I affirm you."

Suppose Bob Sorrell were to come up here, and punch me in the nose. Now just suppose; Bob, sit down. Now Bob Sorrell comes, and he punches me in the nose. And so we have a little altercation. My eyes are teary, and my blood is streaming down; and maybe, my teeth are loosened a little bit, and he has given me a right cross, right in the snout. Now suppose Jim, over here, comes up, and he says, "Now there's a problem here, Adrian; but, I want you to know that Bob, though he's done something very wrong, I want you to know I affirm Bob. I just affirm him. And Bob, I want you to know, son, I forgive you for what you did to the pastor." And Bob says, "Hey, you don't need to forgive me; I've already forgiven myself. I forgive me." And here I am, standing over there, with my nose bleeding. My dear friend, I want to tell you that only the punchee can forgive the puncher. Isn't that right? "Oh," he says, "well, I affirm you Bob." Bob says, "You don't need to affirm me; I'm all right." No, you're not.

You've sinned against God, and only God can forgive sin. We'd better learn that. And somebody else says, "Well, I'll tell you how I deal with guilt." Or, go back to the sermon last Sunday, "The Blame Game." You'd be surprised how many people want to blame somebody else for their guilt. I mean, it happens all the time.

She says to you—your wife says to you, "Honey, we need a gallon of milk. Go down to the store, and get a gallon of milk." He says, "Okay, I'll be right back." He goes down to the store, buys a gallon of milk, stands there, and checks out, you know. He goes back to the house, halfway back to the house, and he realizes he forgot his wallet; he left it on the counter. So he puts the car in reverse, goes back around, and goes back to the store. He says, "Look." He said, "I left my wallet up here, on the counter. Do you have it? What? It was just here just a few minutes ago." The clerk said, "I'm sorry. Maybe another customer got it. Are you sure you left it here?" He goes back home with that gallon of milk; he puts it down on the counter; he tells his wife what happened; and then, he says, "You and your milk." Isn't that an incredible thing? He lost his wallet; he said, "You and your milk!" It's his fault.

But what we want to do, when we feel guilty is, maybe, affirm ourselves, on the one hand, or to blame somebody else, on the other hand; or maybe, we just simply think time will take care of it—just after a while, we'll forget it. What some people call a *clear conscience* is just a fuzzy memory. And that's the way some people try to deal with guilt.

And of course, there are thousands and millions who are dealing with it through alcohol and drugs. One man asked, "Will drinking alcohol help me to do a better job?" And a wise person said, "No, it'll just help you to feel less bad about doing a bad job." But I guess the ultimate wrong answer to guilt is suicide. And if you're contemplating suicide—whoever you are, wherever you may be—may I tell you, it is the ultimate bad decision. It never solves the problem. But there is an answer.

Now again, I am talking to you, dear friend, about the stark actuality of guilt. Joshua is standing there, and he is clothed with filthy garments that are symbolic of sin (Zechariah 3:3). Do you have that?

## **II. The Satanic Accusation in Guilt**

Now the second thing I want you to see—not only the stark actuality of sin, but I want you to see the satanic accusation of guilt. The stark actuality of guilt; the satanic accusation in our guilt.

Look in verse 1 of this chapter: “*And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him*” (Zechariah 3:1). Now again, I remind you that the word *Satan* means “adversary.” He’s pictured as a prosecuting attorney; and, the Bible says, in Revelation chapter 12 and verse 10, that Satan is “*the accuser of [the] brethren*” (Revelation 12:10). Everybody here, listen to me. Satan is constantly accusing you. Do you like people talking behind your back? You have someone who will talk to you behind your back, and he’ll talk to you about it to your face; and, he is an accuser, and he is pointing the finger of accusation in your face. Constantly, constantly, he is accusing you before God, and he is accusing you to your face. And the Bible tells us, in Revelation, that he is “*the accuser of [the] brethren*,” that he is your adversary.

He points out your sins. “Oh,” you say, “I think that Satan would not point out my sins; Satan would want to hide my sin.” Oh no, my dear friend, Satan wants you to sin; and then, Satan wants you to suffer the consequences of that sin. And so therefore, Satan points it out, because he wants to get you in the guilt trap. He encourages you to sin, and then makes you suffer. Or, he rejoices in that suffering, as he points out that sin. You see, what Satan wants to do, very simply, first of all, is to cripple you, and then to blame you for limping. That’s what Satan does. He is the one who has encouraged you to sin; but after you sin, he’s the one who accuses you. First, he encourages you; and then, he accuses you. That dirty devil!

Warren Wiersbe has well said, “Before you sin, Satan whispers, ‘You can get away with it! You can get away with it!’ And after you sin, he shouts, ‘You’ll never get away with it!’” That’s just the way he does. He will encourage you to sin before you sin. And after you sin, he accuses you. He’s the adversary; he’s the prosecuting attorney.

Friend, you had better learn the difference between satanic accusation and Holy Spirit conviction. A lot of people who don’t know the difference—and many of them are right here—you are under the accusation of Satan, and you think you’re under the conviction of the Holy Spirit; you don’t know the difference. Satan is the adversary; the Holy Spirit is the comforter. Satan accuses; the Holy Spirit convicts. Satan accuses to drive you to despair. The Holy Spirit convicts to draw you to Jesus Christ—forgiveness,

freedom, and liberty.

The classic example of that is Judas and Simon Peter. Judas betrayed Jesus Christ; Simon Peter denied Jesus Christ. However, Judas never knew Jesus Christ, and Simon Peter did. Judas, who sold Jesus Christ for 30 pieces of silver, was so guilt-ridden, so filled with remorse, that he took that 30 pieces of silver, and flung it on the temple floor, went out with trembling fingers, made a noose, put it around his neck, stepped over a cliff, hanged himself, and stepped into the Hell before him, trying to escape the hell within him—filled with remorse, under accusation. Simon Peter denied Jesus, but he looked into the face of Jesus, and wept bitterly—did not end up as a suicide, but he ended up as the mighty Apostle of Pentecost, the leader of the apostles, a man of God.

There's a difference between accusation and conviction. You'd better learn the difference.

My dear friend, I'm talking to you about the stark actuality of guilt. I'm talking to you about the satanic accusation of guilt. You'd better make certain that it's not the devil who is accusing you, but the Holy Spirit, who may be convicting you. Let me give you a verse of Scripture: 2 Corinthians 7 and verse 10—it says this: *"For godly sorrow worketh repentance...the sorrow of the world worketh death"* (2 Corinthians 7:10). "Godly sorrow"—that's what Simon Peter had. It worked repentance; he wept bitterly. *"The sorrow of the world worketh death"*—that's what Judas had. He never knew how to get out of the guilt trap. He committed suicide, and Satan helped him along.

### **III. The Savior's Advocacy for Our Guilt**

The final thing I want you to see, this morning—here's the happy part of the message—not only the stark actuality of guilt, not only the satanic accusation in guilt, oh, but, dear friend, the Savior's advocacy for our guilt—the Savior's advocacy. Now look, if you will, again, in verse 2: *"And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this"*—that is, Joshua—*"a brand plucked out of the fire?"* (Zechariah 3:2).

Now here is the courtroom again. There is God, the judge. There's Joshua; his garments are filthy—and indeed, they are filthy. The Bible doesn't deny that. There is Satan, the adversary, who is resisting him, and accusing him. But then, the Lord says to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you"—"The Lord rebuke you." Look at it again: *"The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"* (Zechariah 3:2). Who is this who is speaking? Well, he prefigures, whomever he is, the Lord Jesus.

Put this verse in your Bible: 1 John 2:1: *"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."* You know, God's forgiveness is not an encouragement to sin. God is not saying, "Just sin, and it doesn't make any difference; I'll forgive." No: *"These*

*things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*" But now, listen to the rest of this: "*And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.*" Did you hear that? "*If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.*" You have an adversary, but you have an advocate. The adversary is Satan; the advocate is Jesus. "*If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father...and He is the propitiation*"—that is, He is the satisfaction—"*for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*" (1 John 2:1–2).

Listen to me. Listen—I don't care who you are. I've got the greatest news for you, if you will receive it: There is somebody who is willing to plead your case. You have a defense attorney, and you're guilty; but He steps up to the bar, and He says, "Holy Father, what the adversary has said may be true; but, Holy Father, those sins have been atoned for, those sins have been paid for. And I present, as *prima facie* evidence, the nail scars in my hands. And I plead my blood. I am his advocate. I plead Adrian's cause."

Do you know what the finished work of Calvary is? Listen to the hammering and rejoice. He bowed his head on bloody Calvary, and said, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30). That means, "*It is paid in full.*" Hallelujah! That is the finished work. But do you know what the unfinished work is? Hebrews 7:25: "*He ever liveth to make intercession for [us].*" He never finishes that. On the basis of the finished work, is His unfinished work—the Lord Jesus. We have a high priest, who is passed into the heavens, at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 8:1). And when the adversary says, "He is guilty," the advocate says, "Yes, but for those sins I died."

First John 1:9: "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9). On what basis does He do this? Is it arbitrary? Oh no! Look in verse 2—look at it: "*And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan,*"—and, on what basis is Satan rebuked? Watch it carefully, now; don't miss it—"even the *LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem*"—"these are my elect I have chosen; these are my chosen ones." And He goes on to say: "*Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?*" (Zechariah 3:2). "Joshua is chosen and redeemed; and, on that basis, I intercede. Joshua is chosen and redeemed; and, on that basis, I intercede."

Now with that in your heart and mind, let's let the Apostle Paul flesh it out. And turn to Romans chapter 8. Oh, friend, listen. This is shouting ground. Look in verse 33—Romans 8:33: "*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?*" That's God's chosen; do you see it? "*It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who*"—is doing what?—"maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:33–34). Paul is saying exactly the same thing that Zechariah is saying. We are chosen and redeemed; and, therefore, there is an advocate, who is pleading our cause at the right hand of the Father on high.

Hallelujah! Praise God! My friend, that's something that no psychiatrist, no psychologist, no schoolteacher, no pill, no bottle, no spa, no new suit of clothes, can do for you.

There's the answer to your guilt—right there, my dear friend: the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And “*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?*” (Romans 8:33).

Now listen. He does two things here. We're almost finished, but look at it very carefully: He rebukes Satan; He restores Joshua. He rebukes Satan. Satan is rebuked; Joshua is restored. Why, Joshua was given a change of clothing. That is God's righteousness for his filthiness. The righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ is imputed on the basis of choice and redemption. One who is chosen—one, plucked out of the fire—is given a change of garment, spotless and white. First John 1:9: “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from*”—what's that next little word? Say it. Say it again. Say it loudly—“*all...all*” (1 John 1:9).

Don't you be haunted by the ghost of guilt. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, makes the vilest sinner clean. I don't care what you've done, mister. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all iniquity, because He has chosen us; He has redeemed us. And who shall lay any charge to God's elect? (Romans 8:33).

Now Zechariah doesn't tell us, but the Apostle John tells us, that we must confess our sins for this to take place. And *there's one thing that God won't accept for sin, and that's an alibi*. Remember the last Sunday's sermon, “The Blame Game”? Don't play the blame game; but don't stay in the guilt trap. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and let His precious blood atone for you. “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1 John 1:9). He'll rebuke Satan. I love that. I'm so glad that Satan is rebuked.

Friend, listen. You put your sin under the blood. And *the next time the devil reminds you of your past, you remind him of his future*. Okay? Just remind him. Dear friend, he has no dear Savior who has forgiven his sin, like you have. You don't need to be accused. And if that sin has been confessed, and cleansed, and forgiven, don't you be haunted by the ghost of guilt. If it comes up again, it is satanic accusation. It is not Holy Spirit conviction. The devil will accuse you of sin forgiven. The Holy Spirit will convict you of sin not yet confessed, so you might bring it to Jesus and be cleansed. Hallelujah!

## Conclusion

Let's bow together in prayer. Every head bowed, every eye closed, and no one stirring. My dear friend, may I tell you that counseling and psychiatry—whether pastoral counseling at a church, whether at a psychiatrist or a doctor's office, or at the feet of some guru—can never ever deal with your sin. Only the blood of Jesus can do that. Admit guilt for what it is—a stark actuality. See Satan for what he is—a satanic accuser.

But see Jesus for who He is—a saving advocate, who pleads our cause.

Drugs are not your answer, mister. Young man, suicide is not your answer. Pleasure, a licentious lifestyle, trying to make you forget—that's not your answer. Come to Jesus. He doesn't just deal with the guilt feeling, friend; He deals with the guilt. And once you're free from that, oh, what liberty!

Father, I pray that many today will say *yes* to Jesus Christ. In His wonderful name I pray. Amen.

# What to Do with Your Guilt

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 5, 1995

**Main Scripture Text:** Zechariah 3:1–4

*And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.”*

ZECHARIAH 3:4

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Reality of Guilt

II. The Result of Guilt

A. You Have an Adversary

B. You Have an Advocate

III. Your Release from Guilt

A. Analyze It

B. Confess It

1. Quickly

2. Specifically

3. Completely

4. Confidently

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take God's Word today and find a book toward the end of the Old Testament, the Book of Zechariah chapter 3, as we prepare our hearts to receive the Lord's Supper. And, as you know, the prime requisite for receiving the Lord's Supper is to know Him personally as your Lord and Savior and to have your heart cleansed from every sin. We should never partake of the Lord's Supper with a double mind, an impure heart, and defiled hands. We need to be clean.

Now, there is a legend that tells about Pontius Pilate—Pontius Pilate—you know, who was the one who adjudicated the Lord Jesus worthy of crucifixion and allowed Him to be crucified. He was the Roman governor, and tradition says that after Pilate did that, he went back to Rome to report to Rome since he was the Roman governor what had happened. But, he was conscience-smitten. You know, Pilate washed his lily-white hands in that basin of water, held them up, and said, “I'm innocent of the blood of this just person. See ye to it.” But, we have been told that Pilate was haunted by his

conscience, by the feeling of guilt, and after he'd gone to Rome, he went back, according to tradition and some legend, perhaps to Switzerland, and there in Switzerland he committed suicide. He jumped off of a mountain near Lucerne that some of us have visited. I've been to the top of that mountain, Mount Pilatus, named after Pilate, and he committed suicide there.

Now, here's the part that is strictly legend—not even tradition to it, just legend: that the people say that you can go up to that mountain and listen to the wind, and you can hear the ghost of Pilate lamenting and moaning, as he's trying to wash his hands of the guilt of allowing Jesus to be crucified. That, of course, is mere legend. It has not happened; does not happen. But, there are others who are haunted by a ghost of guilt, and some of them are in this room tonight. And, guilt is eating you alive, and you don't know what to do with your guilt. Americans, as a society, we have denied sin, but we have not gotten rid of guilt. I want to deal tonight on this subject: "What to Do with Your Guilt."

Now, look, if you will, in Zechariah 3, verses 1 through 4: *"And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."* What a wonderful, wonderful story this is! And, how this parable, or this illustration, tells us of how tonight we can take this Lord's Supper and be as clean, as pure, as free, as forgiven, as we can possibly be—whiter than snow, whiter than the driven snow.

## I. The Reality of Guilt

Now, I want you to think of the reality of guilt in the human life, because guilt is a very real thing. And, what we have here is a picture of a heavenly courtroom. And, Joshua the high priest, even though he is a religious man, like those of us here tonight, he is laden with guilt; he is covered with filthy garments. God Almighty is the justice sitting upon the bench; God is the judge. Now, Joshua is the defendant, and Satan is the prosecuting attorney. And, Satan is pointing out Joshua's sin, and he seems to have a good case, because Joshua is wearing filthy garments. And, those filthy garments represent our sin, which the Bible says, "Even our righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of the Lord." And, Joshua seems to have absolutely no defense; he is defenseless, because, indeed, he is guilty. As the Bible says, in Romans chapter 3, verse 19, *"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law:*

*that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”* And, the law says we’re guilty. And, shut your mouth. You’re guilty of sin, and there’s nothing you can do about your guilt. That is you, in and of yourself.

Let me just ask this question, as we’re talking about what to do with your guilt. What is guilt anyway? If you were to stop the average man on the street and ask him this question, “Say, what is guilt?” he would say that guilt is the feeling that you have on the inside when you’ve done something wrong. But, that’s not what guilt is. That is guilt feeling; that’s not guilt.

If you put your hand on a hot stove and get burned; if I were to ask you what is the burn, you’d say the burn is the feeling of pain that you have when you put your hand on a hot stove. No, the feeling of pain is the result of the burn. And, the feeling that people have—this conviction of conscience, this disquietude—that’s not the guilt. The guilt is the actual sin itself.

Now, the problem in America is we’ve all become so touchy-feely that we’re trying to deal with the feeling, and we never deal with the burn. We never really deal with the guilt. And, people have a problem with guilt today because they don’t really understand what guilt is. Guilt feelings are not guilt. Sometimes your conscience will make you feel guilty when you’re not guilty, and sometimes your conscience will make you feel not guilty when you are guilty. And so, you need to get it out of the realm of feeling.

You see, your conscience is like a thermostat. Before I left the house this afternoon, I adjusted the thermostat in my house. That thermostat will operate wherever it’s set. And, some people have a conscience that is defiled; and so therefore it is set at a certain level, and they excuse things that God never does excuse.

Elisabeth Elliott, who was a missionary’s wife with the Auca Indians, told an interesting story. She told about some of the Auca Indians, and I always was amused to hear her tell this. She said some of them, they would go around as savages, stark naked, except for one thing. They would wear a string around their waist—just a string. That’s it: one little string around their waist. And, she asked them, “Why do you wear that string around your waist?” They said, “Why, we’d be naked if we didn’t wear that.” Now, to them it would be unthinkable, it would be a social error, for them to appear in public without that string around their waist. But, don’t any of you come to church like that, please. Now, the point is, to them, that’s where their conscience was set. And so, as long as they have the string around their waist, they felt perfectly not ill at ease at all. You see, their thermostat was set at that level.

On the other hand, there are some people that feel guilty, that have no business feeling guilty. Sometimes, a little child who’s been sexually abused will grow up feeling guilty, when they’re a victim. Sometimes, when parents will argue, sometimes, when there’s a divorce in the family, the children feel guilty. Did you know that? It is often a

thing psychologists tell us, and all of those divorce counselors can say, that when there's a broken home, so many times it's not the child's fault at all, but the child will feel guilty, when they're not guilty. What I am trying to say is that sometimes people who are guilty may not feel guilty; sometimes people who are not guilty may feel guilty. But, guilt feeling is not guilt. Guilt is guilt. It is disobeying the Word of God.

## II. The Result of Guilt

Now, what will guilt do? Well, I said guilt will eat you alive. It will cause anxiety and depression, and you will look at life through a grimy window that is just sort of yellow, because of this unresolved guilt. Sometimes it will cause physical illness. It did to King David before he got rid of his guilt. He said, in Psalm 32, verse 3, "*When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.*" Sometimes guilt will cause you to be spiritually sterile. You to not have any power, any victory, in your life. You see, many times guilt does not bring a man closer to God; guilt will literally drive some people away from God, because they feel hopeless. They don't know what to do with their guilt. Sometimes they'll go to a psychiatrist or a psychologist. Now, I'm not opposed to psychiatrists. We have some fine psychiatrists in our church. I'm not opposed to psychologists. We have some fine psychologists in our church. But, I'm opposed to any psychiatrist or any psychologist who tries to deal with the guilt feeling and never gets to the guilt.

Now, so many times people go to these people and they say, "Well, you've just got feelings of guilt; you need to forgive yourself." Well, very frankly, you can't forgive yourself until God forgives you. And, we're supposed to get affirmed by everybody, you know? "You're okay. I'm okay. Don't worry about it. I forgive you." People say, "Well, we all ought to forgive O. J." Hey, it's not up to us to forgive O. J. I mean, he didn't do anything to me.

I mean, I've used this illustration many times. Suppose Bobby Lewis comes over here and punches me in the nose. Now, Bobby, this is only an illustration. But, he comes over here and punches me in the nose. And then, Bobby feels kind of guilty about it. Brother Bill over there says, "Well, Brother Bobby, don't feel bad about that. You need to forgive yourself." Bobby says, "Okay, I'll forgive myself." And, Bill says, "I forgive you, Bobby," and we say, "Yeah, Bobby, we all affirm you." I'm the guy that got punched, and only the punchee can forgive the puncher. Isn't that right? But, we have a society today that's just trying to get everybody to accept themselves.

But, sin is primarily against whom? It's against God. Only God can forgive sin, and all of this psychobabble, this mumbo jumbo, about affirming yourself and forgiving yourself, and everybody forgiving everybody else, there's a Greek word for that. It's *baloney!* We are guilty, and you cannot deal with sin by psychobabble. And, some

people just say, “Well, just forget it.” You can’t forget it; you can’t gloss it over. Now, you can try to forget it, but often, what some people call a clear conscience is just a fuzzy memory. It’s still there. Some people turn to drugs or alcohol. What does that do? It just helps you to be less ashamed of doing things badly. It doesn’t deal with the guilt. Some, like Pilate, may try suicide. But, that’s never the answer—never!

#### A. You Have an Adversary

Now, we’ve talked about the fact of guilt. Here was Joshua, the high priest. He’s actually wearing these filthy garments, in verse 3. But, to make it worse, the devil moves in, and the devil begins to accuse him. Look in verse 1, if you will: *“And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him”*—that is, to resist the high priest, the man of God. Now, the word *Satan* means, “adversary”; that’s literally what the word *Satan* means.

Now, you have an adversary, whether you know it or not, whether you understand it or not; he is Satan. And, he works as a prosecuting attorney to accuse you, to point out your sins, to point out your failure. Revelation chapter 12, verse 10, says this: *“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down,”*—now, he’s talking about Satan being cast down, and notice how they call Satan “the accuser of our brethren”—*“which accused them”*—the brethren—*“before our God day and night.”* That tells us that right now Satan is pointing out my sins and your sins to God, just as he was pointing out Joshua’s sins in this passage in Zechariah. Now, why would Satan do that? Well, he wants to have you eaten up with guilt, and he wants to condemn you before the face of God.

Now, it is very, very important that you learn the difference between satanic accusation and Holy Spirit conviction, because the devil will accuse you of sin to drive you to remorse. The Holy Spirit will convict you of sin to bring you to confession and cleansing. Now, Satan filled Judas to betray the Lord Jesus, and then Satan drove Judas to a suicide. He was so filled with remorse that he committed suicide, feeling guilty. Now, Satan wants you to think about your sins. He wants you to think about yourself. He wants you to think about him, but he does not want you to deal with your guilt. Now, you would think that Satan would not want to make people feel guilty for sin, but you’re very wrong.

Now, let me tell you what Satan does about your sin. First of all, before you sin, Satan tempts you to sin. And, Warren Wiersbe has pointed this out. Before you sin, Satan whispers to you, “Go ahead and do it. You can get away with it. Go ahead, you can get away with it.” And then, after you do it, he says, “You’ll never get away with it.” That’s just the way he is. He tempts you to sin and tells you that it’s all right. And then, after you do it, he tells you it’s all wrong. What he wants to do is cripple you and then

blame you for limping. He is the one who loves to accuse you. And so, here's Satan, accusing the man of God.

### B. You Have an Advocate

But now, I want you to notice what the Savior does. You see, there is a prosecuting attorney, but there is a defense attorney, an advocate. Look, if you will, in verse 2: "*And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan...*"—now, wait a minute. Who is speaking here? It says, "*The LORD said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan*"—well, the Lord Jesus is speaking to the Father. The Lord Jesus says to the Lord God Almighty, the Father—"The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee." So, here's a battle that's going on in the heavenlies. There is Satan, the accuser of the brethren; he's pointing out the guilt of Joshua. But, there is the advocate who is rebuking the accuser. Now, 1 John chapter 2, verse 1, puts it this way: "*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*" The Bible never says, "Oh, just go ahead and sin, because it's easy to be forgiven. The Bible always holds the standard of sinlessness. "*These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*"

Now, you know what the word *advocate* is? It's just a fancy word for "lawyer." We have a lawyer; we have a defense attorney. Satan is the accuser of the brethren. He is pointing out our guilt before God. And, friend, we are guilty. And then, the Lord Jesus steps up to the bar and He says, "Satan, the Lord rebuke you."

Now, learn this about the Lord Jesus Christ. He will never defend His children's sins, but He always defends His children. He will defend us. And, on what basis does He defend us? On the basis of the fact that we have been redeemed. Look in verse 2: "*And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?*" That's who we are. Joshua was a brand plucked out of the fire. There he was, a stick in the fire ready to be consumed, and God in mercy reached down and pulled it out of the fire. And, He says this about Joshua: "That's the one I've redeemed. That's mine. He's mine. He is a brand plucked out of the fire." He has chosen us, and He's plucked us from the burning. Hallelujah! And so, He says, the defense attorney moves in and He says, "You leave him alone. The Lord rebuke you. This is Mine. He's My brand plucked out of the fire." That's what He's done for me, and that's what He's done for you.

And, I tell you, when I read this, I thought about that wonderful verse over there in Romans chapter 8, verses 33 and 34. Here's the question it asked—and it's a question the devil cannot answer: "*Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*"

Thank God He's there. The devil may appear to accuse Adrian, but Jesus is there to

defend Adrian. He is there to say, "He's mine. Joshua is mine. Bob is mine. Bill is mine. These are mine, and I have plucked them as a brand from the fire. And, the Lord rebuke you, Satan. You are not going to accuse these."

And, you know the reason that you and I are kept? Not because of our own determination, not because of our own will, but because of our defense attorney, the One who's pleading our case. And, the Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 25, "*Wherefore he is able also to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*" "*To save...to the uttermost*" doesn't mean He can save the worst of people, though He can. It means He saves us all the way to the end, "*to the uttermost.*" He never lets us go. Our advocate rebukes the accuser and restores the accused. Notice what He does. Look in verses 3 and 4: "*Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments...—that's where we might be tonight—“with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.*" Isn't that beautiful? Isn't that beautiful? Not only does He defend us, but He restores us. Not only does He rebuke the accuser, but He says, "Take away that sin." "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" Hallelujah!

I want to tell you tonight, that old filthy garment you might be wearing right now the Lord wants to take from you. Not only does He defend you in Heaven, and no sin will be laid to your account, but friend, He will cleanse you on Earth if you allow Him to. And, He will give you that change of garment tonight, and you can be dressed in His righteousness. And, even that carnality, that selfishness, that pride, that disobedience, it can be taken away tonight.

### **III. Your Release from Guilt**

Now, what should you do with your guilt tonight? Listen to me very carefully.

#### **A. Analyze It**

First of all, analyze it—analyze it. That guilt you're feeling tonight, is it accusation from the devil, or is it conviction from the Holy Spirit? If it's accusation, it just drives you to despair. If it's conviction, it will draw you to Jesus Christ. Analyze your guilt. Don't let the devil put a guilt trip on you. But, on the other hand, listen to the Holy Spirit of God, who's speaking to you tonight.

#### **B. Confess It**

And, when the Holy Spirit of God convicts you of any sin, just confess it. First John 1:9 says, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse*

*us from all unrighteousness.*" And, how should you confess?

### **1. Quickly**

Number one: Do it quickly. Don't wait. Don't let one iota of a scintilla of sin remain in your heart and in your life. You're looking at a man tonight who's not a perfect man. I have faults, and I hate them. But, I'll tell you one thing. You're looking at a man tonight who does not harbor sin in his heart and his life. I'd be a fool to do that. I don't want any un-confessed sin in my heart and in my life—not one, not a little, not part, not any. I don't say that braggingly. That's the way we ought to be, because Jesus died for those sins.

### **2. Specifically**

Deal with it. Deal with it quickly. Deal with it specifically. Don't just say, "Now, Lord, if I've sinned, forgive me." Call it by name. If the Holy Spirit of God doesn't convict you of something, fine, you may be clean and pure. But, if He says, "You did thus-and-such," or, "Here's where you're wrong," call it by name; put it under the blood.

### **3. Completely**

Do it quickly. Do it specifically. Do it completely. Don't do a partial job. Don't say, "Well, Lord, cleanse me here and here and here and here." God's not going to grade on a curve, folks. You've got to be clean—totally, completely clean.

### **4. Confidently**

And, do it confidently. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* And so, the next time Satan accuses you and reminds you of your sin, you just look back at him and remind him of his future. And, just say, "Hey, my sin is under the blood of Jesus Christ, and who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

## **Conclusion**

I was reading a story about a young grocery chain executive who parked his car on the edge of a treacherous 200-foot cliff there at the Pacific Ocean some 25 miles south of San Francisco. And, this young grocery chain executive, Bill Mansdoerfer, was going to commit suicide, and he felt this was an appropriate place. And so, he left his home, burdened with sin and guilt, and he was writing a suicide note. And, he had the radio on, and he listened to station KEAR there near San Francisco, and as he listened there was a song that was being played, and he listened to that song. The words of that song said this:

*God understands your heartache.*

*He knows the bitter pain.*

*Oh, trust Him in the darkness.*

*You cannot trust in vain.  
God understands your sorrow.  
He sees the falling tear,  
And whispers, 'I am with thee,'  
Then falter not, nor fear.*

—OSWALD J. SMITH

Those were the words written by a preacher, Oswald J. Smith, in Canada. And, this man, this executive, said, "You know, if that had been a preacher, I'd have turned him off, because I wasn't in the mood to listen to preaching." But, he said, "That song, when I heard it, it broke my heart, and," he said, "it saved me from committing suicide." And, he said, "I called the radio station, station KEAR, and I told them what had happened, and I said, 'Thank God your station has saved my life.'" Well, that broadcast and that phone call built a relation between this man and KEAR, and they finally offered him a job at the station in public relations, and then he became the station manager, and not only that, but the director of communications and operations, and a vital part of a six-station family radio network, because he learned this: that our God is a God of the second chance. He is the God who forgives. He's the God who friends us. He's the only one who can really deal with guilt.

That's what we're celebrating tonight, folks: the Lord's Supper. Thank God for the blood of Jesus that makes us whiter than snow.

# **Haunted by the Ghost of Guilt**

***By Adrian Rogers***

**Date Preached: November 28, 1999**

**Main Scripture Text: Zechariah 3:1–5**

*“Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.”*  
ZECHARIAH 3:3

## **Outline**

Introduction

I. The Accused

II. The Adversary

III. The Advocate

Conclusion

A. Consider the Source

B. Confess the Sins

C. Claim the Solution

## **Introduction**

Would you find the Book of Zechariah in the Old Testament and back toward the back of the Old Testament? And, we're going to look in chapter 3.

And, as you're finding it, I want to read to you a story that I clipped from the newspaper a few days ago. And, you probably read it in the Commercial Appeal. The headline is, “Haunting”—the word haunting is in quotation marks—“Leads to Ghastly Find”: New York. Though she lived alone in her Brooklyn apartment, Madeline Carmichael was haunted by the sound of a crying baby. She complained frequently to the building superintendent, who insisted that no children lived nearby. Now, it turns out the complaints had a macabre meaning. Acting on a tip, police found the mummified body of a little girl, dead for 20 years, entombed in a trunk in Carmichael's closet. Police are convinced the toddler was named Latanisha Carmichael, the woman's daughter. Carmichael, 60, was arrested Friday on suspicion of murder. She remained hospitalized after fainting when detectives found the body of the three-year-old girl. Police said Monday they suspect the child was beaten to death, but are awaiting results from the medical examiner.” She says to the building superintendent, “I hear a baby crying! Do something about it.” There was no baby. But, she heard—in her heart, in her mind—a

baby crying, most likely a baby that she had beaten to death 20 years ago.

Now, I don't believe in ghosts, but I believe this woman was being haunted by the ghost of guilt—haunted by the ghost of guilt. And, there are many who are haunted by the ghost of guilt. And, maybe their sin has not been as terrible, not as egregious, but there in the psyche is a guilt that is gnawing away that is causing disquietude. Many of them come to our churches, trudge to church Sunday after Sunday, sing the hymns, give their money, attend the classes, underline their Bibles, but they do not have freedom that they ought to have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There's an old proverb that says, "He is not free who drags his chains with him." And, I want to teach you tonight from the Word of God how to lay down the burden of guilt, how to begin every morning free, without dragging yesterday into today, but greeting the day free in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, here's the background for the Book of Zechariah. Joshua is the high priest. He represents the people of God. But, notice that he has a problem. I'm beginning in Zechariah chapter 3, verse 1: "*And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD*,"—now, "*the angel of the LORD*," that is, "the messenger of Yahweh," is an Old Testament description of Jesus. Jesus, in the Bible, is described as an angel. The word *angel* literally means, "messenger." And, Jesus is the messenger of Yahweh, the God of the covenant. And so, the high priest is standing before Jesus—"and *Satan standing at his right hand to resist him*." So, you have Joshua the high priest, and then you have Jesus, and then you have Satan. Now, the very word *Satan* means, "adversary." Actually, the word itself literally means, "adversary." So, here is Joshua. On the one hand is the angel of Jehovah. On the other hand is the adversary, Satan, who is resisting him, "*And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?*" He's talking about Joshua the high priest. And, that's all any of us are: as a brand plucked out of the fire. Had it not been for Jesus, an eternal Hell would have been our destiny. "*Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying,*"—that is, the angel said—"Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said,"—that is, to Joshua the high priest—"Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with a change of raiment"—that is, with a change of clothing.

Now, many Americans today have denied sin, but they've not been able to get rid of the ghost of guilt. And, even though they have renamed sin—no longer are people sinful; they are sick. No longer are they wicked; they're weak. No longer are they evil; they are ill. Now, they have everything from a neurosis to a psychosis to a physiological maladjustment to a glandular malfunction—anything but sin. But, Jesus did not die for

mistakes. He did not die for maladjustment. He died for sin. Until we deal with sin as it is, we'll never get rid of the ghost of guilt. I say, we have denied sin. But, down in the human psyche, down in the human soul, is this haunting, very much like this woman who heard the baby crying for some 20 years.

Now, I don't know what it is that may haunt you. It may not be something as terrible as the murder of a child. You just may be haunted by a misspent youth. And, now you're middle-aged, and you look back, and you say, "You know, I failed. I missed my opportunities. There are things I could have done—should have done—but I did not do." Maybe you're haunted by neglected duty. Maybe you failed your mother in her need—your father, your wife, your husband, your children. You would give anything if you could just turn the clock back, but you can't do it. Maybe you committed adultery. Your wife still doesn't know about it; your husband doesn't know about it. But, you know about it, and it's eating away at you. And, you wonder, "Will she ever find out?" "Will he ever find out?" And, you've never been able to get relief and release from that sin, and you're haunted by it. Maybe you said some caustic words—some cruel words—to your father, and your daddy died. You never had a chance to go and make it right; or if you had a chance, you didn't take that chance, and now it is too late. And, you would to God that you could undo it, but you can't. Maybe there's some wickedness—some vile deed—that you did—something in secret, perhaps; something when you were in the service overseas—and it's in your heart; it's in your mind. Sometimes you can put it out of your consciousness, but it's still there.

A soldier lay dying on a battlefield; he was obviously dying. The chaplain came and lifted that boy's head, looked into his languid eyes, and said, "Son, is there something I can do for you?" And, that dying soldier said, "No sir. I need somebody who can undo some things." Well, I want to tell you, Jesus is that person, and I want to talk to you about it.

Now, what we have in Zechariah chapter 3 is a courtroom scene. You may not pick it up, but what you have is the accused; what you have is the adversary, and the advocate. Let those three A's keep your mind straight: the accused; the adversary, who is the prosecuting attorney; and the advocate, who is the lawyer. It is a courtroom scene.

## I. The Accused

Now, Joshua stands for the people. And, actually, if we were to bring this into today, it would stand for me. It would stand—he would stand—for you. And, when you look at any passage of Scripture, you ask yourself, "What did it mean then? How does it apply today?" And then, "How does it apply to me personally?" If you don't do that, you haven't really gotten into your Bible. So, Joshua the high priest—remember the high priest stood for the people. Now, he's representing the people. And, in a very real

sense, Joshua is representing you.

And, Joshua, as the accused, has to plead guilty. Look in verse 3: “*Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.*” Now, again, Satan—the word *Satan*—means, “adversary.” And, he has a good case against Joshua—no ifs, ands, and buts about it. It doesn’t say that he might be in filthy clothes, or that they only appear to be filthy. He is dressed in filthiness. And, that is a picture of all of us who are not dressed in the righteousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, Joshua has no defense. He’s obviously guilty. And, that’s what the Bible says concerning all of us, in Romans chapter 3 and verse 19: “*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*” That is, the very first thing that you must do with your sin is admit your guilt. As the accused, we must always plead guilty as charged.

Now, let’s think a little bit about guilt. What is guilt? If you were to ask the average person on the street, “What is guilt?” he would say that, “guilt is the feeling that you get when you do something you think you ought not to have done.” But, feeling is not guilt. Guilt is not a feeling.

If you put your hand on a hot stove, you’re going to get a feeling, but you’re also going to get a burn. The burn and the feeling are two different things. Many people are dealing with guilt feelings, but just as the burn is the raw flesh and the blisters, the guilt is that which causes the feeling, but the guilt is not the feeling.

Now, I want to say this: that your conscience may sometimes make you feel guilty when you’re not guilty. Your conscience is like a thermostat. It will function wherever it’s set. Sometimes headhunters in pagan tribes may not feel guilty at all. As a matter of fact, they might feel quite righteous when they’ve taken the head from somebody else. That’s what they’ve been trained to do. Their conscience will function wherever it’s set. Elizabeth Elliott, who was married to Jim Elliott, that martyr to the Auca Indians, went back to Ecuador to work, and she told of something that was kind of humorous. She said, “In Ecuador, the natives would run around naked. The little boys would not wear any clothes at all. And, they got a little more civilized, and so they said, ‘You must wear clothes.’ And, they said, ‘Well, how much clothes must we wear?’ And, they said, ‘You must wear at least one piece of clothing,’ hoping that it would be all right.” She said, “The little boys came out with a string tied around their waist.” That was the one piece of clothing. To them, they weren’t naked. That was just the way the thermostat was set.

Now, sometimes you may be guilty and not feel that you are. Sometimes you may feel that you are and not be guilty. But, what is guilt? Guilt is a reality. It’s the result of the filthiness of our sin. And, guilt can cause all kinds of emotional and physical baggage. Guilt brings anxiety; it brings depression. The soul becomes a window covered with the dirt and grime of guilt, and therefore everything that we look at is

colored or discolored by the guilt that's in us. And, guilt can make you sick. If you carry around a load of guilt, it can make you physically ill. David said, in Psalm 32 and verse 3, "*When I kept silence...*"—concerning his guilt—"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." That is, he was actually groaning in his sickness. Guilt will do the same thing to you that sand will do to machinery.

And, guilt will bring spiritual sterility. Now, the man who is haunted by the ghost of guilt is not driven to God. You would think that he would be, but the truth of the matter is that a person with unresolved guilt is driven further and further from God. And, so many people who are into things today that they ought not to be into are there simply because of guilt. A man may turn to alcohol, trying to assuage his guilt, and to kill the pain of his guilt. I'm talking tonight to two psychologists who are sitting in our congregation tonight. I've already spied them both. Both of them have degrees, doctorates, dealing with psychology. And, both of these men know this—and I thank God that they know it—but there's no psychiatrist, there's no psychologist, that can deal with guilt apart from the Word of God. All they can deal with is the guilt problem. But, they cannot take away one particle of guilt. I back up. They can't even deal with the guilt problem. They deal with the guilt feeling. But, they cannot take away one particle of guilt. Only God can do that. Now, we've said that the guilt is the burn. The guilt feeling is the pain. A psychologist, a psychiatrist, by medication or counseling, may help you to deal with the pain, but he cannot deal with the burn. Only God can do that.

And, sometimes not only is there that emotional illness that comes, not only is there that physical illness that comes, but there's that bitterness that causes us to pour out that venom on other people, when we ourselves are guilty. You've seen it. We call that, you know, projection. And, it happens even in minor things.

Your wife tells you, "Would you go to the store and get a quart of milk, a gallon of milk?" You say, "Okay." And, you go to the store, and you put the milk up on the counter. There's a magazine over there you get interested in. So, you pay for the milk, read a little bit in the magazine, and pick up the jug of milk, and you go home. And, when you get home, you realize you don't have your billfold. So, you go back to the store, and the clerk hasn't seen your billfold. And, you look all around in the car, and you can't find your billfold. And, you're hot. You get back home. You put the milk on the counter, and you look at your wife and say, "You and your milk." No, what you ought to do is just take your own problem. And, you project it on somebody else, when they've not done anything wrong.

Or sometimes we just simply try to forget that we've done wrong. We think that there's maybe a statute of limitations, that the clock will somehow cause it to evaporate, to resolve itself. But, it never will. Now, when we are young—very young—we try to remember. Because we're in school, we have things we are supposed to remember.

When we get old, contrary to popular opinion, we try to forget. People talk about old people who can't remember things. A lot of older people are trying to forget some things. And, they don't need a good memory; they need a good *forgetery*. But, they cannot forget these things. They are just eaten away with this ghost of guilt.

Sometimes people turn to amusement. America is drowning in amusement. I've told you before, the word *amuse* just means, "not to think." The word *muse* means, "to think." A museum is a place you go to think. And, you put the alpha negative in front of the word *muse*, which means, "to think," you have *amuse*, which means, "not to think." And, we are amusing ourselves into Hell, because we don't want to face guilt. Many are turning to alcohol to try to drown their problems, but they can't do that. And, somebody said, "Will alcohol help me to do things better?" No, but alcohol will help you to be less ashamed of doing things badly. Sometimes people try suicide. And, suicide is never the answer. If you're thinking about suicide, first of all, it's the most selfish thing you could do. And, secondly, it is no solution at all. It is the ultimate act of a lack of faith, the ultimate act of selfishness. It's a way of saying, "God, this problem is too big for You." Don't do that—don't do that. You have to learn how to deal with guilt.

It's obvious, according to this verse, that Joshua was wrong. There's one thing that God will not accept for sin, and that is an alibi or an excuse, because Jesus did not die for alibis or excuses. So, as the accused, we must plead guilty. Not until we plead guilty can we deal with this ghost of guilt.

## **II. The Adversary**

Now, let's move a little bit from the accused, and let's move to the adversary, because, look again at verse 1: "*And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.*" Now, I've told you already that the word *Satan* means, "adversary." You may not believe this, but I'm telling you that you have an adversary—you do. You particularly, specifically, have an adversary. He is very real. His name is *Satan*. And, he is coming against you like he had no one else to come against. Don't get the idea that sometimes some people have *Satan* for an adversary. We all have *Satan* for an adversary. And, he is pictured in the Bible as a prosecuting attorney.

Put in your margin Revelation chapter 12 and verse 10. John said, "*And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ:*"—he's talking now about the final days—"for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." That's exactly what this verse is talking about. Here is Joshua, standing before the angel of the Lord. And, *Satan*, the accuser of the brethren, is there. He is accusing me, and he's accusing you.

Now, you may follow me around, and you may say, "You know, I don't think our pastor is such a bad guy. He doesn't steal. He doesn't get drunk. He doesn't commit adultery. He doesn't gamble. He doesn't take God's name in vain. He's nice to little children." But, I'll tell you one thing. If Satan were to follow me around, or follow you around, he would have plenty to accuse me about at any time. He has plenty to accuse you about too, so stop thinking about what he might accuse me about. But, I did put the thought in your head, didn't I? So, I can be accused over that.

The truth of the matter is—listen to me—Satan is the accuser of the brethren. Now, you would think that Satan would want to hide our sin, but Satan doesn't want to hide our sin. Oh, no, what Satan does is he wants you to sin and then suffer the consequences. What Satan wants to do is to cripple you, and then blame you for limping. He wants you to be doubly defeated. That's the reason that Satan the accuser is also Satan the enticer. And, before you sin, Satan will whisper to you, "Go ahead and do it. You can get away with it." Then after you do it, Satan says, "You'll never get away with it." See what he does? He's the enticer, and he is the accuser. One time, he was whispering to us and telling us to sin; and then, he'll shout at us and accuse us for the very sin he enticed us to do. And, not only will he accuse you before God; Satan will accuse you to your face, because he wants you to suffer.

Now, listen carefully. You had better learn the difference between accusation and conviction. The Holy Spirit is the convicter; He will convict you of sin. The devil is the adversary; he will accuse you of sin. Accusation comes from Satan, and it causes you to feel hopeless and helpless. I guess the best case of that was Judas—Judas, who betrayed the Lord. Judas was filled with remorse—so much remorse that he filled a suicide's grave. The remorse did not draw him back to Jesus; it drove him from Jesus, and he put a noose around his neck and stepped over a craggy cliff. And, in trying to escape the hell within him, he dropped into the Hell before him. His body, like an overripe melon, was cut down and fell on the jagged rocks; and his bowels burst, gushed out. Why? Because of remorse.

Now, true conviction draws you to the Lord. True conviction helps you to see sin for what it is. True conviction causes brokenness that causes you not only to be broken over your sin, but to be broken from your sin. Simon Peter was convicted of his sin when he denied the Lord. But, he wept bitterly, and God restored him. Here's a key verse—2 Corinthians chapter 7 and verse 10: "*Godly sorrow worketh repentance...*"—you see, there's an ungodly sorrow that brings remorse—"Godly sorrow worketh *repentance to salvation not to be repented of.*"—what does that mean? When we have this godly sorrow, we repent. God saves us, and God delivers us; and we don't have to be sorry about that—"but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

So many people have the ghost of guilt, and the sorrow of the world works in them

death, whether or not it is physical death. It may be spiritual death. Satan accuses you not only before God, but he accuses you to your face. He wants you to focus your attention on your sins, on yourself, on himself—anything but Jesus. Now, Satan wants you to live under the dark cloud of guilt and despair. And, do you know, I've found out that some churches even major on guilt. While I will preach about sin, I will not major on guilt. Any person who has spoken long enough knows that you can major on guilt—not guilt that brings true conviction and repentance, but guilt that brings remorse and beats people down—and it becomes a tool of the devil.

There was a man in the Bible, in the city of Corinth, who committed a terrible sin. He committed the sin of incest. He was actually having fornication with his father's wife, his own stepmother. Now, Paul told the church how to deal with this man, and he needed to be dealt with. But, after the man repented of his sin and came back to the Lord, Paul said something very interesting in 2 Corinthians about this man—verses 10 and 11. And, Paul is writing to them, and he's having to deal with the problem in his absence. And, he says, *"To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;"*—then, he says this; listen—*"lest Satan get advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."* Now, what does that mean? He means that some people can be so burdened down with guilt that Satan can get an advantage of this person. Satan is very wily and very shrewd—even in using guilt.

So, what do you have? You have, over here, the accused. That's Joshua. He's in filthy garments; he's obviously guilty. Then you have the prosecuting attorney—not only the accused, but the adversary. He is standing there to resist him. He is accusing Joshua before the Lord, and accusing Joshua to his face.

### **III. The Advocate**

Now, thirdly, you have the advocate. Notice again in chapter 3, verse 1: *"And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said to Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan..."*—well, who is the Lord speaking to, when it says, *"The LORD said...The LORD rebuke thee?"* Is He talking to Himself? In a sense, yes. God the Son is talking to God the Father—*"And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"* Now, he may have sinned; he may have done wrong. But, he is a brand plucked from the fire. That is, he has been redeemed, and the Lord stands up as his advocate, as his defense attorney.

It's the same thing you have in the New Testament in 1 John chapter 2 and verse 1. And, here's what he says: *"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin*

*not.*" Now, he's been telling them how to get their hearts clean and to live in fellowship, and he says, "The purpose of this letter is to help you, that you not live in sin." But, knowing human nature, he says this also: "*And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*" And, you know what the word *advocate* means? That's just a fancy name for "lawyer." We have a lawyer to plead our case. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Now, I want you to go back to the courtroom scene. The Holy God is there upon the throne. Joshua is there in his filthy garments. Satan is accusing him, and he is guilty. Jesus steps forward as the advocate, and He begins to plead the case: "Holy Father, Joshua is guilty, but he has been redeemed. He is a brand plucked from the burning." Today, after Calvary, He would say, "Holy Father, see these nail-pierced hands? For those sins I died." Now, learn this about Jesus. He never defends His children's sins, but He does defend His children. That's very important that you understand this. He never makes it easy on sin. And, even when He forgives, He may chasten. But, we will never stand before God to be judicially judged for our sins. It is Jesus who is our defense attorney, who stands there against the accuser.

And, on what basis does He defend us? His redeeming grace—chapter 3 and verse 2. Now, we thank God for the finished work of Calvary. When Jesus died on the cross, Jesus said, "*It is finished*"—and I thank God for that. But, I want you to thank God for the unfinished work of Jesus. What is the unfinished work of Jesus? Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 25: "*Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*"—"*Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.*"

When I was a young preacher, I preached from this text, and I said, "You see there? Jesus can save them to the uttermost." And, I preached it this way: "He could save anybody, no matter what he's done." And, that is true, but that's not what this text teaches. When it says, "*Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him,*" it means "He's able to save them all the way through; He will never lose them." And, why? Why does He save us to the uttermost? As I said this morning, saving grace is securing grace. Why? Because He ever lives to make intercession for us. We have a defense attorney. We have an advocate. And, when the accuser comes to accuse us before God, before the throne, and accuse us to our face, God forbid that we should give alibis; God forbid that we should conjure excuses; God forbid that we should try to put away our sin or wear it out, thinking that time will take care of it. We continue like that woman that I read about who was haunted by the ghost of guilt.

*Let me read something else. It was in the paper a few days ago: "Toronto. Canadians are soft on crime, at least by American standards. There's no death penalty here, no minimum sentences; and convicted felons are eligible for parole after serving*

only a third of their sentences”—that's Canada, friends. “But, as Karla Homolka discovered last week, there are limits to the Canadian capacity for understanding and forgiveness. Homolka, 29, and her husband, Paul Bernardo, 36, admitted drugging and raping Karla's younger sister Tammy two days before Christmas 1990. The 16-year-old choked on her own vomit and died. The next year, they kidnapped, tortured, raped, and murdered two teenage girls, recording most of it on home video. So horrified was the country with the depravity of their acts, and so extensive was the media coverage, that the couple became Canada's most infamous criminals. Although Bernardo was convicted of two murders and sentenced to life in prison, Homolka got off with a 12-year sentence after agreeing to testify against her now former husband. It was only after the plea bargain was struck that police discovered the videotapes that revealed Homolka to be anything but the battered and manipulated wife she'd claimed to be. Public anger over the plea bargain was so intense that the government was forced to call for a judicial inquiry.” And, I want to skip on down here, because this woman now “has filed a suit alleging that her rights were violated when the warden of her minimum-security prison denied her request to be transferred to a halfway house for female offenders in anticipation of her parole.” Now, skipping a little more: “Homolka told the warden that while in prison she earned a degree in psychology from Queen's University, one of Canada's best, and hoped to start working on another degree in criminology this fall.” She ought to do well in that. “She noted she also had received individual counseling and completed programs”—and watch this—“on self-esteem, anger management, and dealing with abuse and trauma. ‘I learned to get rid of my mistrust, self-doubt’”—now, listen to this—“misplaced guilt, and defense mechanisms. I am now completely in touch with my inner feelings. My self-esteem is quite high.””

Now, friend, that is the garbage that is in today's world, and that is what is ruining society more than anything else. “I have dealt with myself. I have forgiven myself. My self-esteem is put back into place.” She will never deal with guilt until she comes God's way—God's way. And, we see this all over: people who think that through education and psychology and therapy or whatever that they can deal with guilt.

*What can wash away my sin?  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
—ROBERT LOWRY*

But, thank God, the blood of Jesus does totally and completely forgive and cleanse.

Listen to this verse—Romans 8, verses 33 and 34: “*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.*” May I say this: There is no court on Earth that can justify—none! If you're guilty, the court condemns you. If you're not guilty, the court acquits you. But, no church, no court, can justify—that is, to say, “You're guilty, but now we make you righteous.” Only God can do that—“*Who shall lay any thing to the*

*charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also*—here it is again—“maketh intercession for us.” Thank God for the One who ever lives to make intercession for us. Again, I remind you of Hebrews 7:25: “Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Go back again to Zechariah 3 and verse 2: “And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” And, notice, not only does the Lord rebuke the accuser, but He restores the accused. Look in verses 3 and 4: “Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying,”—that is, the angel of Jehovah, the Lord Jesus, said to those who stood before Him—“Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head”—that is, a turban. Now, remember, he’s the high priest. And, you know what was on that turban? “HOLINESS TO THE LORD.” Go back and read Exodus 28 and verse 36: “HOLINESS TO THE LORD.” “So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by.”

Now, folks, here’s what our Lord does; here’s the way that the Lord deals with us. Not only does He take away our filthy garments—and thank God for that; “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”—but He then clothes us with His righteousness and His purity.

## Conclusion

Now, what should we do? I’m coming to the close. What should we do when we’re haunted by the ghost of guilt? Let me give you three steps very quickly.

### A. Consider the Source

Number one: Consider it. Consider the source. Is this haunting, this guilt, is it real or is it manufactured? Some little children feel guilty because they were abused as little children. They’re not guilty, but they feel guilty. Sometimes they hear their parents argue, and there’s a divorce; and it is a fact that often children—especially small children whose parents divorce—feel guilty because of the divorce. It’s a strange thing, but it happens. They feel guilty. So, first of all, you need to consider it. Is it Holy Spirit conviction? Is it satanic accusation? Or is it just psychological wrong thinking? Consider it.

### B. Confess the Sins

But, if there’s sin there, the next step is—after you consider it, after the Holy Spirit says,

"Yes, there are filthy garments there; you've sinned." It can be a sin of omission; it can be a sin of commission. It can be a sin of the Spirit; it can be a sin of the flesh. After you consider it, and the Holy Spirit puts the finger of conviction upon the sore spot, the next step is not only consider it, but confess it. The Bible says, in 1 John 1:9, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" And, notice he says, "*If we confess our sins.*" He doesn't say, "If we confess our *sin*."

Now, we know that we have a sin nature. And so, many of us can say, "Well, you know, I'm no good. Yes, I'm a sinner." No, that won't get it done. Confess your sins. Name them. Nail them. Call sin by its first name. Don't be so foolish as to say, "Now, Lord, if I have sinned, forgive me," because the Holy Spirit will convict you specifically, legitimately. He won't convict you of sin that's already been forgiven and put in the grave of God's forgetfulness. He will name it. He'll say, "You were rude to your wife." "You had a lustful thought." "You were dishonest." "You took God's name in vain." "You committed adultery." Whatever it is, the Holy Spirit will name it exactly. You will never get peace until you confess it. The word *confess* is a combination of two Greek words: *homou lego*, and that literally means, "to say the same thing." *Homou* means "the same"; *lego* means "to speak"—"speak the same thing." To *confess* your sin means to say about your sin what God says about it; not merely to admit it, but confess it. Agree with God. Say with God what God says about your sins. We sing a song:

*Count your blessings, name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.*

—JOHNSON OATMAN, JR.

You count your many sins; name them one by one. It will surprise you what you've done. Name it; call it by name.

Do you want to get forgiveness? Do you know what I do sometimes in my study? I don't let my wife see it, but I'll sit down there in my quiet time, and I will list everything, and lay myself open to the Lord, and say, "Search me, O God, and try my heart." Remember the sermon this morning from Psalm 19? "Who can understand his heart, those secret faults? God, show me." And, sometimes it's very painful. God will show me things that I say, "No, no, Lord, that's really not true. You're wrong, Lord, no." He says, "You're wrong, Adrian. I'm right." And, I'll write it down on a slip, a slip of paper. And, sometimes that list will get pretty long. But then, I'll take that, and I go by one at a time, and I'll deal with it. I'll name it. I'll call it by name. I will repent of it. It may seem like a harmless thing to you, something on my list. You say, "Oh, good night! That's not wrong." It may not be for you, but it would be for me. Or something may be wrong for you that wouldn't be for me. But then, I just go along and just deal with each one of those, then take my pen and just write 1 John 1:9 over the whole thing and tear it up in

little pieces, and get up and I'm free—just free, just free. It's so wonderful.

Do you know how you can tell when you're free? The Bible says, "When your eye is single, your body is full of light." What does that mean? There are no shadows there. There's nothing lurking in the shadow. There's nothing that you're afraid of that may come out somewhere between you and God, or between you and some other person. You are free. Consider it. Confess it.

### C. Claim the Solution

Consider the source. Confess the sins. And then, claim the solution. Don't be haunted by the ghost of guilt. That sin now is buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness, and God has crowned you with a turban that says, "*HOLINESS TO THE LORD.*"

Now, folks, we've spent enough time here tonight, but I want you tonight before you go to bed—surely before you go out of the house in the morning—to make certain that when you walk out the door, when you walk out the door—listen. This is not impossible—when you walk out the door tomorrow morning, you will walk out absolutely clean—absolutely clean. That's the most wonderful thing.

You know, you go to the airport. We've all done this. I think I've used this illustration before. And, they have a thing called a magnometer. And so, you walk through the magnometer, and that thing goes, "Aaaaaaaaa!" "Would you step back, sir? Do you have anything in your pocket?" I say, "Well, I've got my keys." "Would you step through again, sir?" "Aaaaaaaaa!" "Sir, would you step back? Are you sure that's all you have?" "Well, I've got my pen." "Would you step through again, sir?" "Aaaaaaaaa!" "Are you sure you don't have anything else?" "Well, let me see. My billfold." "Will you step through again, sir?" Boy, I feel like I've just been paroled from prison—and no noise, you know. "Thank you."

You know what I'd like to do? I'd like to have one of those on every door in this auditorium that would detect sin. And, you go, walk out; it says, "Aaaaaaaaa!" "Go back in there." You say, "Well, I got this bad habit." "Okay." "Aaaaaaaaa!" "You've got a bad attitude." "Okay." "Aaaaaaaaa!" "Been stealing from God." Listen. You ought to have one of those on your front door. So, you walk out, and you're clean. Have you ever thought about what it means just to be clean; I mean, just to be pure, just to know there's nothing between my soul and the Savior? Why drag that garbage with you? Remember, he is not truly free who drags his chain with him.

Now, Joshua had been saved, but he had that old filthy garment. There is the accused; he represents us. There is the accuser; that's Satan, the adversary. And then, there is the advocate; that is the Lord Jesus Christ. "*If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*" And, I'm going to tell you something. He has never lost a case—not one!

# Lebanon and the Last Days

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 13, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** Zechariah 11:1–6

*“Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.”*

ZECHARIAH 11:1

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The People
- II. The Period
- III. The Place
- IV. The Purpose
- V. The Protest
- VI. The Punishment

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles today, open to the next to the last book in the Old Testament—that's the book of Zechariah—and find chapter 11. If you come to the last book, that's Malachi. Just turn left till you'll find it, the book of Zechariah. And when you find it, I want us to begin reading chapter 11, verse 1. The title of our message today is, “Lebanon and the Last Days, Lebanon and the Last Days.” Zechariah 11:1: “Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Basham; for the forest of the vintage is come down. There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled. Thus saith the LORD my God; feed the flock of the slaughter; whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell and say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not. For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbor's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them.”

Then I want us to go to chapter 12 that continues to speak of the last days. “The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling to all the people round about,

when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." And then I want you to notice, if you will, in verse 8: "In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me,"—that is, they shall look upon Jesus—"whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." And then skip down to chapter 13:1: "In that day shall, there shall be a foundation opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness."

Oh, what a day that will be when the scales will fall from the eyes of the Israeli! They shall look upon the Lord Jesus and they shall mourn for Him and weep for Him. And God will pour out upon them the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they will turn to Him in repentance and faith. A nation shall be born in a day. A fountain will be opened to Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. Hasten the day, Lord Jesus, when that shall happen. I want to tell you, friend, these are amazing days in which we're living. And prophecies, I feel, may be being fulfilled before our very eyes. We may be so close to those things that we cannot see it. And if we could only somehow take ourselves out of this generation and look back in to these days, we may be able to understand perhaps then what kind of days we're living in.

Lebanon is in the newspapers. Lebanon is on the airwaves. But Lebanon is also in the Word of God. I have been to Lebanon—beautiful, beautiful Lebanon—there situated like a jewel on the Mediterranean; Lebanon with her mountains, her rivers, her valleys; Lebanon with her jeweled cities. Such a wonderful city! Such a beautiful city, Beruit! The mountains of Lebanon, the Bekka Valley—all of it beautiful! I've been there and seen it. But our hearts were shocked and our hearts were torn and saddened a few Sundays ago when we heard there in Lebanon 239 of our Marines and sailors had their lives taken just like that, as a person on a suicidal mission with a truck loaded with the equivalency of 12,000 pounds of TNT, a man on a kamikaze mission, drove into that American compound and exploded and detonated the truck himself at our own boys. And we're wondering what's going to happen in Lebanon.

I want you to see that the Bible prophesies that Lebanon in the last days is going to be a door to destruction. Look again in chapter 11, verse 1. Look at it: "Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars." Oh, the trees of Lebanon, the cedars

of Lebanon, the beautiful oaks of Lebanon. It was from Lebanon that Solomon cut down the trees to make the temple. A beautiful land. But here God speaks of the fire coming in, the destruction that's coming in to this beautiful, glorious country. And the Bible prophesies something very strange, that at the last days there'll be a war in Lebanon and you'll not be able to tell who's fighting who, that brother will be against brother. And their own king will seem to fight against the subjects.

Look, if you will, in verse 6: "For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbor's hand"—underscore that—"into his neighbor's hand, and to the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them." There are about five basic factions and power groups in Lebanon today. There is the official government of Jamaal there in Lebanon. But then there's another group of people, the anti-government coalition. They call themselves the National Salvation Front. And these are made of Sunni Muslims and Druse Muslims and some who call themselves Christians in this National Salvation Front. And then you have another group who call themselves the Lebanese Front. These are called Maronite Christians. And then you have another group, the Sunni Muslims and the Shiite Muslims who are there in Beirut, and they have a power bloc. And then you have another group who think that these Shiite Muslims have compromised, and so these are radical Shiite Muslims. And one is fighting the other, and one is killing the other, and one is rebelling against the other, brother against brother, neighbor against neighbor. And then you have the Palestine Liberation Army with Yasser Arafat. And he is cornered now like a cornered rat there in Tripoli on the edge of the Mediterranean, and he's being assailed by his brothers. He's being assailed by his neighbors. And the PLO rebel forces are waging war against the PLO itself. And since the third of this month, over a thousand of them have been killed, and the blood is running deep. And behind the rebel PLO are the Syrians, feeding and helping the rebel PLO. And behind the Syrians are the Russians. And then the Americans are there. And then the French are there. And then the Israeli are there.

Now I want you to listen to this verse again. For God says, "For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbor's hand, and into the hand of his king: they shall smite the land, and out of the land I will, and out of their hand I will not deliver them." Now what God is saying is there's not going to be an answer. It's not going to come by diplomacy. I believe we ought to use all the diplomacy we can. I believe we ought to pray for peace. I believe we ought to work for peace. I believe we ought to fight for peace. But I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, if you think that shuttle diplomacy or any other kind of diplomacy is going to solve this problem ultimately, you are wrong and you don't understand how deeply the feelings run in that area.

Now I want to say that there are all kinds of ideas and all kinds of strident forces, but there is one thing that unifies a great number of people in that land, regardless of how they feel about anything else. Do you want me to tell you what it is? Their hatred for Israel. They are unified in their hatred for Israel. And this verse says here in chapter 12, verse 3, "And in that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." The Bible prophesies in the last days that Jerusalem is going to be the hot spot of the entire world, and that the nations of the world are going to find themselves warring and fighting and being troubled over this city of Jerusalem, the holy city. And I want to tell you, dear friend, it's a religious thing with so many of them who are fighting. And sad it is that men would fight over religion, but they do.

I was reading something in this past week's newspaper. It's an analysis by George Will in The Commercial Appeal, and this is what he said. I want you to listen to this. He said, "A tape of a Syrian television broadcast, which I unwisely played while having breakfast in my sunroom, shows Syrian ceremonies last month commemorating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Yon Kippur War. A sordid civilian and military officials attended. There is martial music on the tape, but no narration. None is needed." Now listen to this: "Girls in uniforms stand in a row having and holding live snakes. Suddenly, the girls begin killing the snakes by biting through the snake's heads. Snakes are sinewy, and the biting is not easy, and the girls, although eager, do not seem to enjoy this." Well, I guess not. Then he goes on to say, "Next, young soldiers tumble out of moving trucks, pounce upon puppies and stab them repeatedly. One soldier seems to drink a puppy's blood, and so forth." The rest of it goes on. These are people who are showing the hatred that they had and the intensity that they have in what they call a holy war.

Now we wonder, who was it that destroyed our boys? Who was it that drove that truck with that 12,000 pounds of TNT? Well, the U.S. News and World Report this past week said this: "Persons identifying themselves as members of the Islamic Holy War—notice this—the Islamic Holy War, a pro-Iranian underground group, sent word to news agencies that the organization launched the truck bomb." Now I want to quote them. "We can send 2,000 fighters to die in South Lebanon. The world should wait for more surprise actions from us." Now what they're saying is this is not just one or two people. "We have got 2,000 who are ready to do the same thing." There is a commitment unto death against God's ancient people, Israel.

We need to understand, ladies and gentlemen, what the situation is there in Lebanon and why there does not seem to be an answer. As neighbor is against neighbor, as men war against their president or their king, the king seems to be fighting against his subjects, and everything seems to be confused because God has prophesied in the last days that Lebanon is going to be a door to destruction. "Open thy

doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars..." In the last days, God says, "I'm going to make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all nations."

Now the Syrians do not want the Israeli to find a peace and to establish any kind of peace in Lebanon, because the Syrians hate the Israeli, and because the Syrians would see that as weakening the Syrian position. And so the Syrians are doing all that they could do to exacerbate the situation there in Lebanon. But who's behind the Syrians? The Russians. And arming and training and nudging the Syrians on are the Soviets. Does the Bible speak about this? Indeed, it does.

I want you to take your Bibles now and turn to Ezekiel 38. Just turn left again. You'll come to the book of Ezekiel after a few books. And turn, if you will, with me, please, to Ezekiel 38. I want you to notice one of the strangest prophecies in all of the Bible, Ezekiel 38. I begin reading in verse 1: "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him. And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: and I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armor, and a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah and the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with these. Be thou prepared and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them."

## I. The People

Now in the prophecy, I want you to notice, first of all, the people. Who is Ezekiel talking about? Commentaries, conservative Bible scholars, have for years said that this is a prophecy that is headed up by Soviet Russia. When God here is speaking of these people, first of all, He's speaking of Soviet Russia. Notice in verse 2, Gog. The word Gog means prince or leader. Then notice where he speaks of the land of Magog. That's the land in which this prince or this leader lives. And then the chief prince. Now the phrase chief prince has been rendered and may be rendered prince of Rosh, which some linguists believe, and I believe, is a variant spelling for Russia—a prince of Russia. Meshech, many believe, is the insipient forum for Moscow. Tubal on the Tubal River now called Boblisk, an industrial and military center.

Do you know what Mr. Scofield said who gave us the Scofield notes and the Scofield Reference Edition of the Bible as far back as 1909, when the scenario was not at all like it is today? This was before the Lebanese War. This was before the Syrians were as they are. This was before the Russians were in the position that they're in today. In

1909, Scofield said, concerning this passage of Scripture, that the primary reference is to the northern European power headed up by Russia. All agree. All agree. He's saying there no quibbling about this. This is a reference to Soviet Russia. Here, I believe, that Ezekiel, looking down through the tunnel of time, had a revelation from Almighty God, and God said, "I'm going to give you a prophecy concerning that mighty Russian bear. In the last days, Soviet Russia.

But that's not all of the people that he mentions. He mentions some more. For example, look down in verse 5. He mentions Persia. Now what is Persia? Well, that was an ancient empire. What is Persia today? Iran, Iran, situated there on the Persian Gulf, is that nation that we used to know by Persia. But it also includes Iraq. It also includes Afghanistan where the Russians have moved in. It also includes parts of Pakistan. But I want you to notice ally of Russia in the last day, Ethiopia. It fell to Communism in 1975. And Libya, where the mad man Qadhafi is. Libya, that has been exporting the Communist gospel in Northern Africa, is mentioned, and has been pressuring Ethiopia to fight against the Israeli. And then he mentions Gomer. Now what is Gomer? Gomer speaks of those eastern European countries that are behind the Iron Curtain. It is an amazement to me that the prophet Ezekiel could see that there would be that cleavage, that there would be that Berlin Wall, that Iron Curtain, and that there would be a segment of Eastern Europe that would align itself with Soviet Russia. And then he mentions Togarmah, which is modern southern Russia and parts of Turkey. And he says here that they are all going to come together. They're going to co-lead.

But an interesting thing to me is this: that in this listing of nations you would certainly expect to find Egypt. But Egypt is not listed. Why? Because today Israel and Egypt have a treaty together, and you would not find Egypt today joining with the Russians in an alliance against God's ancient people. It's amazing how exacting the Word of God is. Now in verse 7 God says that the Soviets are going to be a guard unto the rest of them. Now the word *guard* actually means commander. And that is that this is going to be hatched in the Kremlin, and that Russia is going to lead this attack, this incursion, this invasion into Israel. These are the people, the people.

## II. The Period

But now I want you to notice something else. I want you to notice the period. I want you to see when this is going to take place. This was not a prophecy for Ezekiel's time. Look, if you will, in verse 8: "After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, that is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel..." Now when is it going to take place? Ezekiel was told that it was going to take place in the latter years, in the last days. That's the reason I have entitled the message today, "Lebanon and the Last Days."

God, I believe, is telling this generation, if we have the ears to hear it, that we are living in the last days.

### **III. The Place**

All right. I want you to notice not only the people, and the period, but I want you to notice the place. Look again in verse 8. "After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and that is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel..." That is the place of this invasion. Russia is coming in the last days against Israel. That's what the Bible says. The people that it brought back from the sword, the people that have been gathered out of many nations.

Now for eighteen centuries there was no nation of Israel. For 18 centuries this could not have been fulfilled. But in May 14–15, 1948, the republic of Israel was constituted. Israel became a nation brought back from the nations of the world. And there she is. Amazing how Ezekiel saw this. Amazing how Ezekiel knew this and prophesied that the Russian bear would meet the Lion of the tribe of Judah on the mountain of Israel in the last days. This is the place where it will happen. Verse 8 says they're going to be dwelling confidently. Actually, your Bible says they will be dwelling safely all of them, the last part of verse 8. But a better translation, a variant reading, is confidently. They're certainly not safe. If they are safe, it's only because God Himself is going to watch over that nation. But the word literally means confidently.

You'll never find a more arrogant, more confident soldier than the Israeli soldier. I don't know where they have it, or where it comes from, but they have a feeling we cannot be beat. We will not be beat. The Israeli Air Force, I believe, is the best air force in the world. They have military know-how and expertise that allows them to strike with strategy and with perfection. Whether you like it or not, agree with it or not, all the nations round tremble at the power of tiny little Israel. They're dwelling confidently there. And so the place, the mountains of Israel.

### **IV. The Purpose**

Now I want you to notice the purpose. Why are the Soviets coming down? Why are they going to make this incursion? And I believe that Lebanon is going to be the door through which they'll come, as the door is open in Lebanon for destruction. Why? Well, look in verse 9: "Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm"—he's talking to Russia now—"and thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee. Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: And thou shalt say, I will go to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell

safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates."

Now here's the purpose in verse 12: "To take a spoil, and to take a prey; and to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, and that dwell in the midst of the land." The old bear will be hungry, sniffing out a new morsel to devour. You see, Israel is a land that has cattle and goods and food. The nation Israel is one of the few nations in the world now that produces enough food to feed its people and export more food, one of only six nations in the world that does that. They have cattle. They have goods. They have farms. And Israel is becoming the breadbasket. At the same time, the Soviets have had one crop failure after another. And were it not for American grain, they'd be hard put to put so much into their military machine. They'd have to go back to farming again. Perhaps we ought to go to the zoo and read the sign that says, "Don't feed the bear." But they're hungry. But not only that: the Soviets want the oil in the Middle East because they're quickly running out of oil to run their war machine with. Beside all of that, they want a warm water port. Beside all of that, they want to be able to control the Suez Canal, and they want to be able to go through the Suez into the Persian Gulf. They don't want to have to go in an emergency around the tip of Africa. They don't want to be cut off from that. Beside all of that, they want the wealth in the Dead Sea. Did you know that the wealth in the Dead Sea—that wealth now controlled by Israel—has been estimated by scholars to be more than four times the total wealth of all of the United States—the wealth from the Dead Sea waiting there to be mined? And those minerals that are there, that potash, those other phosphates and minerals that are there to make fertilizer out of and other things, awaiting there to be mined. And Russia wants the wealth in the Dead Sea.

But I'll tell you something else Russia hates. You see, not only are they coming to take a spoil, but also a prey. That is, they're coming to win a victory of their enemy. One of the reasons that Russia hates Israel is that Israel is one of the last outposts of democracy there in the Middle East. And Russia wants to spread her Communist gospel there. And Russia knows that as long as Israel is there, she'll have difficulty doing so. And so Russia wants to get rid of America's ally and that outpost of democracy there in the Middle East—she wants to snuff that out. Now she could not, in the court of world opinion, say so right now, so she's standing behind the Syrians, who are standing behind the PLO, who are standing behind this group and that group. But there is a thread that holds the whole thing together, ladies and gentlemen, and that is a coalition of people who have gathered themselves together, as the Bible says, that all the nations of the world ultimately are going to be gathered against Jerusalem, and Jerusalem will become a burdensome stone and a cup of trembling for all of the people of the world. And, ladies and gentlemen, all you have to do is pick up your newspaper today and

read it and you'll see that that Scripture has been fulfilled before our very eyes. And so that is the purpose—verse 12: to take a spoil and to take a prey. That's why they're coming.

## V. The Protest

Now the next thing I want you to notice: not only the people, the period, the place, the purpose, but I want you to notice what I'm going to call the protest. Look, if you will, in verse 13: "Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee,"—that is, to say to Russia—"Art thou come down to take a spoil? Hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? To carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?"

Now who are these nations? What do they represent? Who is Sheba and who is Dedan and all of the rest of these? Bible scholars say that Sheba may be Yemen, modern Yemen; Dedan, Saudi Arabia. They're even more sure about Tarshish. They believe Tarshish, that has always been equated with a seafaring people and a sea going people, speaks of Great Britain. Notice it speaks there in verse 13 of "Tarshish and the young lions thereof." The symbol of Great Britain has been a lion. As a matter of fact, if you get an English coin, you'll find a lion on one side, Queen Elizabeth on the other side. But it speaks of Tarshish and the young lions thereof. Who would the young lions be? Who are these lion whelps that have come from Great Britain? The United States, Canada, Australia.

What's going to happen? What's going to happen when the Russians, the Soviets, and all their coalition and all of their allies come against the land that was brought back from the sword? What's going to happen when they come against Israel? What's going to happen when they come down against God's people? I'll tell you what's going to happen. Diplomacy, and that's all, from our side. You know what the West is going to do? The West is going to say, England is going to say, America is going to say, Canada going to say, Australia is going to say, "Oh, have you come to do this? Have you come to take a spoil?" I believe the idea in verse 13, talk is all that's going to be from the west.

Oh, we're good at talking. When they shot down that Korean airliner 007, and it went down in flames, boy, did we have a lot of rhetoric, a lot of talk. "Look what the Russians did." But they know that the west has come to a place where we're so paralyzed with fear that we will give diplomacy, we will give talk, we will ask questions, but they feel that we are losing our will, our resolve to fight, and that's all we'll do. They watch us. They take a measure of us. And so there will be protest, but the protest will do no good. It's amazing how we forget things, isn't it?

I was just thinking. This doesn't have anything to do with the sermon, but when's the last time you heard the term Reaganomics? You don't hear that now, do you? No, not

since the upturn. You know, that's a forgotten phrase. That used to be on the air every night. Reaganomics, Reaganomics, Reaganomics! We forget so easily.

## **VI. The Punishment**

But now I want you to notice something else. I want you to notice the punishment. I want you to notice what God is going to do. This is one of the most amazing prophecies in all of the Bible. I want you to begin now where we left off in verse 13 and begin reading in verse 14: "Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog,"—that is, unto the Soviets—"Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army." Then some people say, "Brother Rogers, do you think it's going to be literal horses?" No, I believe this is Ezekiel's way of talking about coming with implements of war, just the same way that Isaiah men, in their last days, men will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. He's not talking about swords and plowshares. He's talking about implements of war and implements of farming. This is the language of that day. But notice what he says. "And thou shalt come against my people"—verse 16—"of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me..."

Now watch this: "I," God says, "will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes." Soviet Russia is going to preach one of the mightiest sermons that's ever been preached. Soviet Russia is going to be used to give Almighty God the glory and the honor and the majesty, and God is going to take the occasion of this Soviet attack of Israel as a place where God is going to get glory.

Now why does God do this? Friend, there's a principle in the Bible that God allows His enemies to be exalted on high that He Himself might pull them down and get glory. Let me give you an amazing verse. It's Romans 9:17. It is speaking about what God did to the ancient Egyptians and old Pharaoh, and this is what it says: "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." Now notice what God said to Pharaoh. God said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh, you're the king of Egypt. You have seemingly limitless power. I am the one who raised you up."

The Bible says God raises up kings and He putteth down kings. God raised Pharaoh up that he might show His power in Pharaoh. And what little boy, what little girl, what grown person does not know the story of the crossing of the Red Sea when God gloriously triumphed over the Egyptians in that day? It is a story that has been told throughout all generations. Even Cecil B. DeMille made a movie about it. Everybody

knows about what God did, and we're still talking about it millennia later. And He said, "I did that to you, Pharaoh, that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." And literate people all over the world know what God did so long ago to Pharaoh.

Friend, I want to tell you, God is going to do the same thing to Soviet Russia. God is going to raise Soviet Russia up, and God is going to so ignominiously defeat the Soviets, and it will be obvious that the Israeli didn't defeat the Soviets. It will be obvious that the Americans didn't defeat the Soviets. It will be obvious that Kissinger didn't figure it out. It will be obvious that God did it. It will be such an unmistakable work of Almighty God that God is going to be sanctified in what happens. That's exactly what it says. Look at it again here. The Bible says in verse 16, "And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days. I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me..." It's going to be in a time of a great awakening. "...when I shall be sanctified in thee, O God, before their eyes. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?" Now just put a star by that. God says, "For many years it has been prophesied that I will do it." God says, "I am going to put hooks in your jaws"—verse 4 of this chapter—"I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws..." God's going to put a hook in the jaw of the old northern bear. And the Kremlin will think they thought of it. But have you ever read in the Scripture that the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord? "As rivers of waters, He turneth it whithersoever He will."

And God is baiting a trap for the Russian bear. And Lebanon, I believe, is going to be the door of destruction where God says, "Open thy doors, O Lebanon." And I believe that will be the land bridge, along with Syria, from which that Russian bear will come sniffing out his morsel to meet the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And what happens when the Russians come down? Well, I want you to read here in verse 18: "And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury will come up in my face."

Do you know what God said about His ancient people? "He that toucheth you will be like one who touches the apple of mine eye." Do you know what the apple of your eye is? Your eyeball. Do you like for somebody to stick their finger in your eye? God says, "When you come against my people, that's when you're sticking your finger in God's eye. "He that toucheth you shall be as he that toucheth the apple of mine eye. And when you come against Israel, my fury is going to come up in my face." When Russia strikes Israel, God will strike Russia, according to this passage of Scripture.

Now how's He going to do it? Well, first of all, there's going to be a great earthquake. Look, if you will, in verses 19–20: "For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I

spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; so that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all the creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.” God is going to shake old mother earth. And I suppose one of the greatest earthquakes this world has ever known will take place simultaneously with the invasion of Israel by the northern power.

But that's not all. Then God's going to send, together with the earthquake, great confusion in the armies of the enemy. Notice verse 21: “And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother.” I have noticed in the Bible, in my study of the Bible, when God judges His enemies, He puts the enemy to confusion and let's the enemy destroy himself. They're going to turn one on another. And every man is going to pull his sword. The Israeli are going to be fighting the Libyans, and the Russians are going to be fighting the Libyans, and the Libyans the Ethiopians, and Ethiopians the Persians, and they're going to be fighting one against another. And then, on top of that, God is going to send all kinds of convulsions of nature.

Look, if you will, in verse 22: “And I will plead against him”—that is, against Gog, against the Soviets—“with pestilence and with blood: and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.” What a day that will be when the earth is trembling, when the heavens are belching forth waters, when thunder is rolling along the ground, when there's confusion and smoke and battle and implements of war, and they're turned every one against his brother! The next chapter says that 84% of the Russian army will be decimated, five-sixths of the Russian army. I believe it is this devastation of the Soviet power bloc that will open the door for the Antichrist and make him virtually the world ruler, because the Soviet power bloc will be broken and the Antichrist is going to come out of the western power bloc.

## **VII. Conclusion**

Now what's the purpose of all of this? What does God have in mind? Read the last verse of this chapter and you will see it. “Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.” God is gong to get glory to Himself. God is going to do something that absolutely cannot be explained apart from God. I want to say again, the Israeli will not get the credit. I want to say again that the Americans will not get the credit. I want to say that there's no diplomacy that will get the credit. It's going to be unmistakably a work of God in the Middle East, and it's going to come to pass in the last days. I believe it's

going to be the beginning of that day when the eyes are opened of the people of Israel and somehow through all of this, and the nations of the world will come to look upon God as there's one great harvest of souls in the last days.

Now I must finish, but I know what you're thinking, and I know the question that you want to ask. And here's the question: "Brother Rogers, when will this take place: before or after the Rapture of the Church?" I don't know. I don't know. I can't find any verse that says when it will take place. Oh, I have seen some who say that it will take place during the tribulation, but the arguments have not convinced me. I have seen others that say it will take place before the tribulation, but the arguments are not convincing. I just know that it's going to take place and it's going to take place in the last days. And I know this, dear friend. If it's going to take place before the Rapture, we may be very close to the Rapture. And if it takes place after the Rapture, we may be even closer. All I know is that from this passage of Scripture I've got a deep feeling we're living in the last days. It shall come to pass in the latter times.

Now that brings up a question: Are you ready? Are you ready? Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? If you were to die right now where you're city, where you're sitting, would you go to heaven? Do you know Jesus? Friend, I want to tell you, these are not just things for us to put in our notebooks; they're things to put in our hearts. I want to tell you, dear friend, if you really believe these things, you're going to be doing everything you can do to get your brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, neighbors to know Jesus.

# Will There Be Peace in the Middle East?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 26, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** Zechariah 12:2–3

*“Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.”*

ZECHARIAH 12:2

## Outline

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- I. Will There Be Peace in the Middle East?
- II. Will the Church Go Through the Great Tribulation?

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take God's Word and find the Book of Zechariah, if you will. The title of the message is: "Will there be Peace in the Middle East?" It's a very interesting question. And I want to say, in case you're wondering, indeed, there will be peace in the Middle East; but not yet—not yet.

I think all of us stood in awe, and anyone who has a modicum of understanding of the times, or anybody who has any interest whatsoever in world peace, or the destiny of the nations, watched with amazement to see the glimmer of a peace treaty between the Palestinians and the Jews concerning that land that we call Israel, or Palestine. One of the interesting things about the treaty is this: that it's really an agreement to begin to study to agree. It is not a peace treaty, as we would think of a peace treaty. There are so many details to be worked out, but there is one detail that no one wants to talk about now. Oh, when the Israelis are together, they talk about it. When the Palestinians are together, they talk about it. The Israelis have one idea about it, and the Palestinians have another idea—and that is what will be done with Jerusalem—Jerusalem.

And I want to give you some scriptures tonight. I don't want you to try to find them in the Bible—not because they cannot be found, but I don't have time to wait on you. And actually, a lot of these scriptures are found all through the Bible. And so I'm going to preach a missionary sermon today—take a text and go everywhere preaching the

gospel. So we're going to be taking a lot of scriptures. The best thing you could do would be just to turn your bulletin over, and jot these scriptures down, if, indeed, you have that interest. But I would say, primarily, you keep your Bible open around Zechariah somewhere; and then, later on, we'll go to the New Testament.

## I. Will There Be Peace in the Middle East?

But I want you to look in Zechariah 12, if you will, first of all. And God makes a prophecy. Zechariah 12:2—God says, "*Behold*"—when God says *behold*, that means "behold!" And God says, "I'm trying to tell you something": "*Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.*" That is, there's coming a time when Jerusalem will be in the midst of great warfare. Notice verse 3: "*And in that day*"—evidently, there's a day to come—"I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people..."—now, that's an incredible statement—"for all people:"—one city, Jerusalem, will be a stone so heavy that it will break the backs of all people—"all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it" (Zechariah 12:2–3).

There's no city on earth quite like Jerusalem. I've been in Jerusalem many times; I was there just a few weeks ago. I always want to go back. There is something indescribably different about Jerusalem than from any other place on this Earth. It's not like any other city in the world. God put Jerusalem in the very heart of the world. Ezekiel 5:5: "*Thus saith the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her.*" The word *midst*, here, is the navel. It is the navel of the Earth. It is a city like no other city. Did you know that Jerusalem is mentioned in the Bible over 800 times? Now we don't know what the future of Memphis is. We don't know what the future of Washington, Paris, London, or Tokyo is. But God has given us, in His Word, the future of Jerusalem.

Now I want to give you some verses, and I want you to listen and see what God thinks about Jerusalem. Now remember, with over 800 references, these have to be sparse and a few. But God says, in Psalm 2, He talks about how the heathen will rage, and how the people will set themselves against the Lord, and His Christ (Psalm 2:1–2). And then, He says, in one of my favorite verses in all of the Bible—in Psalm 2:6, He says: "*Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion*" (Psalm 2:6). God says, "*My king*" and "*my holy hill of Zion*." What is *Zion, the holy hill of Zion*? That's just another word for *Jerusalem*. That's just another description. God says, "*I am going to enthrone my Son upon my holy hill*" (Psalm 2:6). Now He calls *Jerusalem* "*His holy hill*."

How big is the universe? I mean, stretching out across the velvety darkness of limitless, measureless space, from the fingertips of the Almighty, there came galaxies

upon galaxies upon galaxies. Who can say how far is up? Who can say how far is east and how far is west? So far as we know, space is infinite in its dimensions. And yet, out of all those spinning, whirling galaxies in the bosom of the blackness of space, God chose one galaxy, the Milky Way. And out of that light galaxy, spinning there, in space, the Milky Way, God moved in; and, He chose one solar system, our solar system, evolving and spinning around the sun, 93 million miles away. And out of that solar system, God chose one planet out of all of the billions and billions and innumerable entities and bodies in space, God chose a little, insignificant planet, the Earth. And He says, "*The earth is the LORD's*"—"*the earth is the LORD's*" (Exodus 9:29).

And then, out of all of those places on the Earth, God chose a land: the land of Israel. Some call it Palestine, but God calls it, in the Bible, "My land." And then, in that land, God chooses one city above all of the cities of the Earth; and, God says, "That is my holy hill" (Psalm 2:6). You may not agree with it. You may not understand it. You may say, "Well, if I were God, I would have chosen Benton, Arkansas. I would have chosen Switzerland. I would have chosen some other place." The Texans—they know what He would have chosen. But let me tell you something: God chose one place, the same place that He told Abraham to offer up Isaac. He said, "You go to the place that I will show you" (Genesis 22:2–3). And God said, "*Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill*" (Psalm 2:6). There's no other piece of real estate just like that piece of real estate; and, it belongs to God.

Now listen to these scriptures here from Zechariah. Listen, if you will, in Zechariah 2:12: "*And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land*"—in the holy land—"and shall choose Jerusalem again." The Lord will do that. That's what Zechariah says. Look, if you will, in Zechariah 8:3. I love this: "*Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion,*"—He's coming again to Zion—"and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem:"—God says, "I will live in Jerusalem"—"*and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.*" The Lord says, "I'm going to come back, and when I come back, that's going to be my headquarters." Look, if you will, in Psalm 137:5–6. Don't turn to it. Just listen to it. Here's what the psalmist said—he said, "*If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.*" Oh, friend, there's no other city just like Jerusalem. And then, here is, I suppose, the crowning one: Isaiah 62:1—God says, "*For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*" God says, "I am not going to stop. I'm not going to quit. I will have no rest. I will never be satisfied until righteousness goes forth from Jerusalem"—Jerusalem.

Did you know that Jesus called Jerusalem, in Matthew 5:35, "*the city of the great*

*King?*" And that's the reason that Zechariah said Jerusalem will be "*a burdensome stone*"—a burdensome stone—"though all the nations of the world gather themselves together against it" (Zechariah 12:3). Isn't it amazing? Why should everybody be so interested in Jerusalem? I mean, when you see Jerusalem, it doesn't have any water to speak of. You know what it's rich in? Rocks. Limestone. I mean, it's not a major port. There's not the confluence of great thoroughfares. It has not industrial or economic significance, per se, and yet, everybody in the whole world is saying, "What is going to happen to Jerusalem?" because Jerusalem is not like any other city.

The name *Jerusalem* means "city of peace," though it has known little peace in its 3,000 years. And I want to say that Jerusalem can expect more heartache and more tears. Will there be peace in the Middle East? Yes, but not now. We may have a lull. We may have an interlude. I thank God for it. And anything we can do to stop any bloodshed, any warfare, I am for it, if is honorable and decent. But the Bible prophesies some things that are yet to come to pass in the Middle East.

If you're familiar with the Book of Ezekiel—and we'll not get into details—but in Ezekiel 37, 38, and 39, the Bible speaks of a northern power that will invade (Ezekiel 38:15). And the Bible says this northern power is going to come down against the city—against the people, that is—brought out of many nations that is dwelling safely—that is, in an interlude of peace. That makes me wonder if, indeed, that invasion from the north is not near. You say, "Now wait a minute, Pastor. You used to preach that, one day, Russia would come down. But Pastor, have you heard what has happened to Russia, the great Russian bear? Why, haven't you heard about the implosion of communism? Don't you know that that danger is over?" No, I don't know that danger's over. I think that danger is greater than it's ever been. Why? Because a bear is dangerous; a wounded bear is more dangerous; and a wounded, hungry bear is the most dangerous.

You need to understand, folks, there is turmoil, as we have seen, in the former Soviet Union. We don't know what's about to happen. Dick Cheney recently said, "The only point, probably, on which we agree is the realization that we simply do not know what the future will bring for the former Soviet Union." We've been watching television, last week, to find out who's going to be the premier, who's going to be the president, which side the army is going to line up with—which, I want to remind you, there still an army.

When I visited Moscow, some time ago, I went to the American Embassy, and had a briefing. And they talked about the power—the military power—that is still there. And I said, "I want to ask you a question. I have read that they still do not give an accurate accounting for all of the atomic weapons. There are some atomic weapons that no one can account for. They don't know who has them, or what province they're in." I said, "Is this true?" He said, "Yes." I said, "How could that be?" He said, "You just have to

understand the way that they keep records."

Did you know that the Soviets are still spending an estimated 15 to 33% of their Gross National Product on armament and rearmament? But you see, the monolith is broken up now. And in the southern republics, do you know what the dominant force is, right now? It is Islam, in the southern republics. And I want you to know that, in central Asia, the former republics of the Soviet Union, there are 50 million people who follow the Islamic faith, and the number is growing.

Now you see, in the Soviet Union, according to the estimates that I've read, around 25,000 atomic warheads exist, 1,400 long-range missiles, 63 nuclear subs, 160 long-range bombers, but Kazakhstan has 10 to 15% of all of these weapons. They're stored there. There's also a stationary nuclear base there. And there's a great affinity between those people in the southern provinces of what was formally the Soviet Union—there's a great affinity, there, with Iraq, Pakistan, Iran, Libya. And these people, who have not yet been able to get their hands, so far as we can tell, on atomic warfare, may soon have, or may have now, some of these errant weapons, some of these misplaced weapons. We do not know. I remind you that, last week, the world did not know who would have its finger on that button—just last week! We did not know who would even have his finger on that red button, if there be such a red button. But what I'm trying to say is this: that the danger has not evaporated. It is the instability of the area that makes the probability of this invasion all the more real. Russia is one of the great producers of oil in the world, but her production of oil is dwindling drastically.

And the Bible says, in Ezekiel 37 and 38, that there will come that invasion from the north (Ezekiel 38:15). What form that will take I do not know, and you do not know, but we know it is coming. When will it come? Well, the Bible says it's going to come at a time when Israel feels safe (Ezekiel 38:14). I wonder if these could not be the days. But then, the Bible also prophesies that there's coming out of the west—not only from the north, but coming out of the west—a world leader. That world leader is the Antichrist. He's called *the man of sin*. He's called *the son of perdition*. He is called *the beast*. He is called *the wicked one*. He is called *the prince*. And the Bible teaches that he will come as the result of a peace treaty (Daniel 8:25).

Put in your margin: "Daniel 8:25." It speaks of the Roman prince, because he will be a European. He will be a Roman. He will come, as it were, out of the old Roman Empire. And this is what the Bible says about him: "*And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper...*"—now, that's a pregnant phrase—"he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart..."—he is going to be the consummate egotist—"he shall magnify himself in his heart,"—and now, listen to this next phrase—"and by peace [he] shall destroy many..."—it doesn't say *by war*. It says—"by peace [he] shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of

*princes;*”—that is, against our Lord, against Jesus—“*but he shall be broken without hand*” (Daniel 8:25). That means, no human being is going to do it; Almighty God is going to do it.

And the Bible prophesies, in Daniel 9:27, that this European leader is going to make a peace treaty with Israel for seven years, and Israel will feel safe. Now will she make the peace treaty? Will the Roman prince make the peace treaty, after the invasion from the north, or before the invasion from the north? We don’t know. What I think is this: that when the northern power comes down against Israel, the Bible teaches that that northern power is going to be totally devastated. And that will be the wreck, the ruin, the devastation, almost the annihilation of all the former Russian military might. And they will be buried there, on the mountains of Israel. And those military weapons will be used as fuel in the nation of Israel for many days to come. And I believe, at this time, America will have become the second-rate power that she is fast on her way to becoming. And that can happen in just a few years—a few months, for that matter. It may have already happened, for that matter. And there will come the new center of influence out of Europe, and that Mediterranean Sea, which will become a Roman basin lake. This Antichrist will come. He now will be virtually the one-world ruler. He will have unified all of the nations of the world. He will have homogenized all of the religions of the world. And he will say to Israel, “I am going to make a peace treaty with you. You want to rebuild your temple? I will allow you to rebuild your temple.” Perhaps the temple mount and the mosque that is there will be destroyed in the earthquake that takes place after the northern army comes down. We don’t know.

The Bible says, in the Book of Daniel, “We’ll know it when it happens. Seal up the prophecy. It’s for the time of the end” (Daniel 9:24). But when it happens, we will see. We don’t know exactly how it’s going to happen, but we do know, according to Daniel 9:27, there will be a seven-year peace treaty. And that treaty will be broken in the middle of that seven-year period. The Antichrist, the beast, inflamed with the devil’s ancient hatred for Israel, will turn on the Jews, and begin to persecute them with unmitigated horror and trouble.

Now when that happens, the Lord Himself will come to defend Jerusalem. Put this verse down—Zechariah 12:8, and following: “*In that day shall the LORD defend...Jerusalem...*”—I love that—“*In that day shall the LORD defend...Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David;*”—you take a weakling; in that day, God’s going to give that weakling such strength that he’ll seem like the warrior David—“*and the house of David shall be as God,*”—you take the strong people; they’re going to have the power that God has—“*as the angel of the LORD before them.*” That is, when God defends Jerusalem, there will be no one who can stand against them: “*And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations*

*that come against Jerusalem*" (Zechariah 12:8–9). These nations that will be bivouacked there, in the Valley of Jezreel there, before Armageddon, under the control of the beast—the Antichrist—will be there, getting ready to finally decimate—finally destroy—the Jew, finally take Jerusalem. But God says, "Though all the nations come, I am going to fight against them" (Zechariah 12:9).

But now, here's the sweet part; here's the wonderful part—and, God says, in Zechariah 12:10, and I love this: "*And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications.*" I have been to the Western Wall—the Wailing Wall—so many times. I have seen these ultra-orthodox Jews, precious people, praying with all of their heart for Messiah to come—for Messiah to come—and He's already come! He's already come. But God says, "In that day, I'll just pour out the spirit of grace; and, they'll understand, and they'll see" (Zechariah 12:10). And as the scales fell from Paul's eyes, the scales will fall from their eyes. And in Zechariah 12, the Jewish Old Testament Scriptures say, "*And they shall look upon me whom they pierced...*"—I've never been able to understand how a Bible-believing Jew can look past that verse—"they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zechariah 12:10). There will be a period of tribulation. Peace in the Middle East? Yes, but not now—not until the Lord goes forth to fight for Jerusalem.

Now I want you to go to the New Testament. I want you to take your Bibles, and turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, if you will, for a moment. This one you may turn to. I'm going to break in, in verse 9, and break in, in the middle of a sentence: "*For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;*"—now listen to this—"and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10).

Now you say, "Pastor, you say that there's going to be an invasion from the north. You say there's going to be a Roman prince who will be the Antichrist. You say that he's going to make a seven-year treaty with Israel. In the midst of that treaty, he's going to break it. What's going to happen to the Church during all of that time? Where will we be? How do we fit in? What place do we have?" Well, I want to talk to you about that. And I believe that all of us need to get a clear understanding of what our future is as children of God. There is wrath to come. The wrath to come is the Great Tribulation. It will make any trouble that you've ever seen look like a Sunday School picnic. It is going to be a time of Hell on Earth. It will be a time of unspeakable sufferings on this Earth. Daniel prophesied of this time. Don't turn to this verse, but listen to it—Daniel 12:1: "*And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that*

*same time:*”—that is, there's nothing in the annals of recorded history that is comparable to this time of trouble—“*and at that time thy people shall be delivered,*”—who were Daniel's people? The Jews. They shall be delivered—“*every one that shall be found written in the book.*” That is, those who will receive Christ, and those who will be redeemed.

“*The wrath to come.*” In Matthew 24:21–22, our Lord looked down with His omniscience through the tunnel of time, and Jesus saw the Great Tribulation. And this is what Jesus said that time of trouble would be like: “*For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved:*”—if God did not step in, everybody on Planet Earth would be killed—“*but for the elect's sake*”—these precious Jews—“*those days shall be shortened.*” Now it's called *the wrath to come.* What is it going to be like?

Turn to Revelation 6—and you may turn to anything, as far as I'm concerned. But Revelation 6—Revelation 6—is dealing with this wrath. Look, if you will, in verse 17. Here's the theme of chapter 6: “*For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*” (Revelation 6:17). Now remember that Paul said, “God has delivered us from wrath” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). But this day is coming. “*The great day of his wrath is come*” (Revelation 6:17).

Well, what will it be like? Well, go back to the beginning of Revelation 6, and there, you see, in the first three verses, where the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse begin to ride: “*And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder,*”—and, you know, when it thunders, you know it's about to storm—“*one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.*” That is, “John, I'm going to give you a view into the future”: “*And I saw,*”—now listen to this—“*and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer*” (Revelation 6:1–2).

Now first, the white horse speaks of conquest; it speaks of triumph; and it speaks of peace. He has a bow, but he doesn't use it. He's riding upon a white horse. The conqueror rides upon the white horse. The bow is a symbol of power. The crown that he has is a symbol of dominion. He goes forth to conquer. Do you know who this is, riding on a white horse? It's the Antichrist. And he's going to be received. The world is headed toward a one-world religion, and a one-world economy, and a one-world government, so fast it is frightening. If you don't understand that, where have you been?

And this Antichrist will come, and the world will believe him. Jesus said to the people of His day, in John 5:43: “*I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.*” Interestingly enough, let's go back to the Roman prince. We said the Roman prince is going to come out of the unified

Europe, the former Roman Empire. Did you know what the proposed emblem for that unified Europe is? Do you know what it is? A white horse! I've got the clipping in my files. The headlines say, "The White Horse as a Peace Messenger!" The article goes on to say, "The dove, symbol of peace and communion between nations, has competition now. The design of the white horse was donated for the purpose of a peaceful uniting of five continents, symbolized through strength"—that's the bow—"to assure freedom and unity. At the head of the horse, the United Nations emblem is to be seen with five differently colored ribbons, symbolizing the five continents. World organizations recognize five continents: Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Australia." There you have it. Here's one going forth on the white horse. We have finally come together—a one-world government.

But after the white horse, comes the red horse. That's the reason I said peace, but not now. Look at the red horse, in verse 4: "*And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword*" (Revelation 6:4). Now this devil-inspired leader, this Roman prince, has come, now, with the idea of world conquest in his evil brain. But as you well know, power corrupts, and total power totally corrupts. And so when this egotistical monster will have his way, there will come war, and havoc, and destruction. Therefore, the first horse is white, but the second horse is red, because Jesus warned, in the last days, there would be wars and rumors of wars. And when Antichrist rides forth on his white horse, the spirit of hatred will inflame men's hearts, and cause brother to kill brother, and fathers to slay their own sons. And without the Prince of peace, this Earth is going to suffer war unrestrained, and the dripping swords drenched with the blood of those who refuse to accept the mark of the beast will be everywhere. Dead bodies will be lying in the streets. There will be the stench of human flesh. There will be the groans of pregnant women. And the words of Jesus piercing the air, "*Woe unto them that are with child, and to those that give suck in those days!*" (Matthew 24:19). Great tribulation.

But then, the black horse gets ready to ride. Read verses 5–6: "*And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine*" (Revelation 6:5–6). First, a false peace, then war, and then famine; because, famine follows war, as night follows day. And the scales in the hand of this rider tell us that food is to be carefully measured and rationed. A penny—a denarius—means a day's work will only buy one meal. It will be a time of escalating prices, starving nations. They tell us, now, that almost one-half of the 5 1/2 billion people on the face of this Earth live in perpetual

hunger. But you send the able-bodied men out, off to war, and then fields are not taken care of, and the chemicals decimate, and the bombs and the other things scorch the earth. When Titus, the Roman general, besieged Jerusalem, in 70 A.D., the fields were left uncultivated, and the food was confiscated by the Roman soldiers. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem, half-crazed, devoured their own children. These days will be worse!

Then, after famine comes death, and the pale horse. Look, if you will, in verses 7 and 8: *"And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death,"*—now, watch—*"and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth,"*—that's more than a billion people—*"to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth"* (Revelation 6:7–8). The word *pale* is the Greek word *chloros*. It means, “a ghastly yellowish green.” It’s the color of decay and death. In this Great Tribulation, there’s going to be a chain reaction. First of all, the man who comes with a promise of peace—and with peace he’ll destroy many—this is the rider on the white horse. And after him comes war. And after war comes famine. And after famine comes death. And a billion will die, because sin causes hatred; and hatred causes war; and war causes bloodshed; and bloodshed brings famine; and famine produces death. And after death comes Hell.

A terrible time is coming upon this Earth. And the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are ready to ride. And if you can pick up your Bible, and pick up your newspaper and listen, you can hear the hoof-beats in the distance. And these riders are on their way! Will there be peace in the Middle East? Yes, but not yet—not yet. There’s coming a time of great, great trouble. It’s going to be so great that the Bible says, in those days, men will desire to die, and death will flee from them (Revelation 9:6). And what we would call *death* today would be a welcome release.

## **II. Will the Church Go Through the Great Tribulation?**

Now the question: Will the Church go through the Great Tribulation? No! The Bible says, in that verse I gave you in 1 Thessalonians, that God delivered us from wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Now let me give you some other verses. I want you to look in the Word of God, and look, in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–4. And I’m going to address the question now, as to whether or not the Church will enter into the Great Tribulation. Remember that 1 Thessalonians 1:10 says that God has delivered us from wrath. He has saved us. Now turn to 1 Thessalonians 5:1—Paul says, *“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.”* Now listen to verse 3: *“For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon*

*them...”—“When they shall say, Peace and safety...”*—you say, “Pastor, it looks like we’re having peace, now, in the Middle East”—“*When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren*”—now, notice the difference between *they* and *ye*—“*But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief*” (1 Thessalonians 5:1–4).

Then, look, if you will, in 1 Thessalonians 5:9–11. He goes on to explain it: “*For God hath not appointed us to wrath,*”—that’s not God’s appointment for the Church—“*but to obtain salvation*”—so, deliverance—“*by our Lord Jesus Christ...*”—now, wrath, the Great Tribulation, is not for the Church—“*God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.*” He’s talking about the Rapture, now.

“*Wherfore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do*” (1 Thessalonians 5:9–11). Now the Second Coming of Jesus, the Rapture, is when the dead in Christ shall rise first, and we which remain and are alive will be caught up (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). That is a source of comfort. But if we were looking forward, not to the Rapture, but to the Great Tribulation, there’s no comfort in that.

Notice, in Revelation 3:10, God speaks to this church of Philadelphia, and He says, “*Because thou hast kept the word of my patience,*”—that means “of my endurance”—“*I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*” The *hour of temptation*—that means, the wrath—the Great Tribulation—that’s coming. But the Lord said, “I’ll keep you out of that.” Well, you say, “That’s just the church at Philadelphia.” But read in Revelation 3:13: “*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*” What He said to Philadelphia He says to all of us.

If you’ll study history, you’ll find out that, when God poured His wrath upon Sodom, God took Lot out of Sodom. When God poured out His wrath in the days of Noah, God put Noah in the ark. God did not pour out His wrath upon His beloved. You see, we’re waiting for Christ, not Antichrist. We’re waiting for Christ, not Antichrist. Therefore, we who are Christians are expecting the Rapture, at any moment. Now if the Church goes through the Great Tribulation, none of us could be expecting Jesus now, because we have to say, first, the Tribulation. But friend, there is one doctrine that is taught in the Bible so clearly and plainly, and that is the imminent—any-moment—coming of Jesus Christ.

Now again, I want you to jot these Scriptures down, because you don’t have time to turn to all of them. But Matthew 24:36: “*But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*” And anybody that tells you he knows the day that Jesus is coming, you just look him in the face, and say, “You are a liar, and a

false prophet." And they're all around. And if I were God, and somebody prophesied the day Jesus comes, I'd—just for meanness—I wouldn't come on that day. No, you don't know. The angels don't know. That means He could come at any moment, friend. But if He came at the end of the Great Tribulation, all I'd have to do is start ticking off the days. In seven years, He'll be here.

But listen—Matthew 24:38: "*For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered the ark...*"—He's saying—"so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:38–39). Eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage—that doesn't sound like the Great Tribulation to me; it sounds like people going lackadaisically through the normal round of life. And then, just as the flood burst upon the Earth in Noah's day, so the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will be. And our Lord, in Matthew 24:42, makes it so very plain. He says, "*Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*"

And in Matthew 24:44, He says, "*Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*" I've always thought it would be Monday, 'cause I can't think at all on Monday. "*In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh*" (Matthew 24:44). Listen to this scripture—Mark 13:32: "*But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.*" When Jesus Christ was here, in His humanity, He had self-limited Himself, and even Jesus, as He walked this Earth, was not privy to that day. And so He goes on to say, "*Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping*" (Mark 13:33–36).

Now friend, I have read enough scriptures to tell you that the coming of Jesus is imminent, and that you don't know the time. It could be at any moment. There's no scripture that needs to be fulfilled. We're not waiting on an invasion from the north. We're not waiting on the Antichrist. We're not waiting on a peace treaty. We're not waiting on anything. We are waiting for Jesus! He is coming at any moment—maybe tonight, maybe tonight! You say, "I don't think He's coming tonight." Then, that's a good sign He might: "*For in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh*" (Matthew 24:44). Our Lord is on His way.

Now God has a plan for the nation Israel. God has a plan for Jerusalem. But God has a plan for His Church. And God has not appointed us to wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9). You see, if we're waiting on the Great Tribulation, then, rather than looking up, we just start looking around; and, rather than listening for the sounds, we'd be looking for

the signs. But at any moment, Jesus can come.

Well, you say, "Then, Pastor, why do things like this peace treaty—why do they cause you, then, to believe that the Second Coming of Jesus is near?" It's a strange thing, because, while these signs are not for us, we can still read them.

If you're going down the road, and it says, "Plumber's Picnic: five miles," you're not a plumber, but you see it, you say, "The plumbers are having a picnic down there, five miles away."

You see, while these things speak of Israel, and not of the Church, we just look there, and we see it. And while the Bible teaches that Jesus can come at any moment, all of these things engender that excitement and that thrill in our hearts. As we see these other signs taking place, we think how near it must be—how near it must be—when Jesus is coming again.

## Conclusion

I don't know all that's going to happen in the Middle East. But I know one thing, folks. If there comes an invasion from the north, get ready! If you see the European Common Market come together, especially with the confederation of 10 nations, get ready! If you see a peace treaty of seven years, get ready! But if you don't see these things, get ready! Just get ready. I'm telling you, folks, be ready to go, because Jesus is coming. And God's people say, "*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*" (Revelation 22:20). Come.

# The Scars of Jesus

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date:** July 22, 1990

**Main Scripture Text:** Zechariah 13:6

## Outline

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I. God Is a Suffering God

II. God Is a Sympathizing God

A. Pain Has a Protecting Purpose

B. Pain Has a Unifying Purpose

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III. God Is a Saving God

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## Introduction

**T**ake your Bibles and turn with me to the next to the last book in the Old Testament, the Book of Malachi. If you come to Malachi, just turn left a few chapters, and find chapter 13—Zechariah chapter 13—and, in a moment, we're going to share one of the most interesting verses in all of the Bible. That's Zechariah chapter 13 and verse 6: “*And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends*” (Zechariah 13:6).

What do these words mean? And when will they be spoken? Zechariah chapter 13 is a prophecy of the second coming of Jesus Christ. And the Bible teaches that, when Jesus Christ comes again, those who are going to speak with him, with amazement, they are going to be astounded. They're going to ask the risen, returning Savior, “What are those wounds in your hand?” The nail prints will still be there; after 2,000 years, the nail prints are still there. And he will answer, “That's where I was wounded: in the house of my friends.”

Did you know, ladies and gentlemen, that, in the resurrected, glorified body of the Lord Jesus Christ, the scars of His crucifixion still remain? Remember there, in John 20, verses 25 to 28, after Jesus Christ had come out of the grave, and doubting Thomas said, “*Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe*” (John 20:25). Jesus appeared, and Thomas was there: “*Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My LORD and my God*” (John 20:27–28).

Ladies and gentlemen, the scars of Jesus are on that glorified body in Heaven. And when He comes again, He will bring those scars with Him. The only man-made thing in Heaven is the scars of Jesus. And they are there for all eternity. And through the endless ages, He will bear those scars. Even in a glorified, incredibly beautiful body, He will still bear the scars. When He comes again, He will bring those scars with Him. Why? Why is very important. It is very significant. Because I want to deal with you, today, on the problem of suffering and pain.

All of us here have known or will know suffering. None of us is going to come out unscathed and unscarred. Man that is born of woman is full of troubles (Job 14:1). And sometimes, when people are going through terrible pain, sometimes, when people are going through heartbreaking agony, they say, "O God, help me! Please, God, remove the pain! O God, solve my problems! Please, O God, take away this pain!" But He seems to be silent. And you have great doubt.

There have seemed to be a lot of people who have this great doubt, and this doubt is rooted in the suffering of humanity. They begin to ask questions like, "Well, maybe God wants to remove my pain, but He's not able." They say, "Well, no, if He's not able, He wouldn't be God." Well then, they say, "Well, maybe He's able to, but He just doesn't want to." And then, they say, "Well, if He doesn't want to, maybe He's unloving." And then, they say, "Well, maybe He's not able, and He doesn't want to, because maybe there is no God."

And I suppose, as the pastor, I've been asked over and over again this question, perhaps more than any other. Why? Why do human beings suffer? I have a bigger question than that. Not why do human beings suffer—but why does God suffer? You say, "Wait a minute, God doesn't suffer." Oh yes, He does. Yes, He does. When Jesus Christ comes again, He's coming with wounds in His hands. And you can't have wounds in your hands; you can't be crucified, without suffering. And as a matter of fact, if you will read Zechariah chapter 13, you will find out that it is Jehovah that he is speaking to about who has wounds in His hands.

How can Jehovah be wounded? God was in Christ—that's how. Jesus is God—that's how. And God has suffered. And I want to tell you something else. God still suffers.

The scars of the Lord Jesus were really souvenirs. When you go on vacation somewhere, maybe you buy souvenirs, and you take them back with you. It's to remind you that you've been there. You show other people: "This is what I got, when I went to Mexico. Or, this is what I got, when I went to Europe. I brought this back." And many times our souvenirs are trivial, cheap, and simple. But the scars of Jesus—the souvenirs of the Savior—were valuable.

## I. God Is a Suffering God

Those scars tell us three things. Number one: the God of Heaven is a God that suffered—a suffering God. Let me give you some verses. Isaiah 42, verse 14—God says, “*Now will I cry like a travailing woman*” (Isaiah 42:14). Do you know what *travail* is? That’s labor. I’m told that there’s no greater pain than labor pain. Of course, I don’t believe that. The hardest thing is to be out there in the waiting room—just waiting. Boy, I’ll get it when I get home. No, the greatest pain that a human being can endure is that excruciating pain of bringing new life into the world. And God says of Himself, “I cry like a travailing woman.” In Isaiah 63:9, God spoke of the affliction of His people. And the Bible says, concerning that, “*In all their affliction he was afflicted*” (Isaiah 63:9). In your afflictions, my dear friends, God is afflicted.

Can God be afflicted? Oh, yes. Remember the story there, in the Book of Acts, where the Apostle Paul, before he was called the Apostle Paul—he was named Saul, and he was persecuting the church, and having Christians put in jail, and having them put to death—and then, he met the Lord Jesus Christ, he saw a light that was brighter than the noonday sun, and the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to him. This is what Jesus Christ said to him—Jesus said, “*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*” (Acts 9:4). Saul might have said, “I don’t know who you are, but I’m not persecuting you. I am persecuting these Christians.”

But the point is well-made, dear friends, that, when Christians are afflicted, Jesus is afflicted. “In all of their afflictions, He was afflicted.” When you are persecuted, He is persecuted; He suffers. You just think about it. In the parable of the prodigal son, God is shown as a father of a wayward son. Is there any father here who has a wayward son, who is not suffering? You see, the Bible says, in Ephesians 4, verse 30: “*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God*” (Ephesians 4:30). Do you know what *grieve* is? *Grieve* is a *love* word. Only those that you love can grieve you. Your neighbor’s kids may vex you, but your kids can grieve you. God is grieved. “*Grieve not the holy Spirit of God*.” God is afflicted. God travails.

When the body hurts, does the head know it? Of course. You see, the body sends messages of pain to the head. If your brain waves are dead, your body does not know pain as you know pain. It is the head that causes us to recognize pain in the body. The Church is the Body of Jesus Christ. When the body feels pain, the head receives these messages of pain. “In your afflictions, He is afflicted.” Our Lord suffers. And you, dear friend, when you hurt your hand, the entire body suffers. Let me ask you another question: When a wife is unfaithful to her husband, does not the husband suffer? I mean, when a wife breaks her marriage vows, and begins to sleep with another man, does that not grieve the husband, when he knows about it? When the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is unfaithful to the Heavenly bridegroom—He’s the bridegroom; the

Church is the bride—is Jesus not grieved? The Bible says, in James 4, verse 4: “*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?*” (James 4:4). I’m not talking about physical adultery; I’m talking about spiritual adultery. Worldly Christians break the heart of Jesus Christ, because we are His bride.

## **II. God Is a Sympathizing God**

Beyond a shadow of any doubt, the very first thing that the scars show us is this: that He is a suffering God—He suffers. Well that brings a real question. Somebody says, “Well, Pastor, isn’t He God? I mean, if I could stop my suffering, I would. Why doesn’t He stop His? I mean, how could God be taken prisoner by pain—He’s God? Why doesn’t He just wash His hands of all of it—He’s God; He doesn’t have to suffer?” You are right. He doesn’t have to, but He does. So why does He? Because, not only is He a suffering God; He is a sympathizing God. I want you to get this, dear friends: He is a sympathizing God.

Hebrews chapter 4, verse 15, talks about Jesus, our high priest, and it says, “*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are*” (Hebrews 4:15). That is, when you hurt, He knows how you feel. When you suffer, He understands.

Friends, He has been here. He knows; He feels; He shares; He sympathizes. You see, in the Bible, you read where Jesus was “*moved with compassion*” (Matthew 9:36; Matthew 14:14; Matthew 18:27; Mark 1:41; Mark 6:34). Actually, the word *compassion* means, “from the pit of your stomach.” Have you ever hurt so bad that it feels like someone has kicked you in the stomach? That’s the word *moved with compassion*. The Bible speaks of His churning with pain. The Latin word *compassio* is a word that we get our word *compassion* from. It means, “to suffer with.”

You see, Jesus, in John 11, verse 35, at the grave of Lazarus, weeping. The Bible says the shortest verse in English, “*Jesus wept*” (John 11:35). Oh, my friends, why? Because He is a sympathizing God. He hears; He knows; He understands. Well, you say, “I don’t want His sympathy; I’d rather just have Him take away my suffering. Why, if He’s so great, why doesn’t He take away my suffering, so that He can take away His?”

### **A. Pain Has a Protecting Purpose**

Do you know what a doctor said? I’ll tell you who the doctor was, in a moment. But a well-known physician, immensely successful, said this: “If I have the power and the authority to eliminate all pain, I would not exercise that power, that authority, and that right.” You say, he must have been a fool doctor. No he’s a very fine doctor. Because, he knew that pain was the gift of God. As a matter of fact, this doctor, Dr. Paul Brand, had spent four decades, working with lepers. One thing that leprosy does is that it

deadens the flesh to pain. And lepers cannot feel pain. And pain has a protecting purpose. And a leper who cannot feel pain cannot protect himself as he ought.

For example, in the very common thing, you and I, as we are walking, are constantly shifting our weight. And a jogger runs for a while on his toes, and then he runs for a while on his heels, so that he can give his feet certain rest. A leper, when he walks, never shifts his gait, never adjusts, because he cannot feel that pain, that tiredness. And literally, he wears out his flesh.

But you see, God has given us pain there, for it is our protective measure. If you are walking, and you turn your ankle, do you know what happens? You fall. You don't have to fall—you could keep on walking and bear the pain; but God built a protective device in you, so that, when you turn your ankle, it sends a message to your brain that causes your thigh and your calf to relax, and the weight goes, and you go down. You fall—why? To keep you from straining those ligaments.

Joyce and I were in Switzerland one time, and going up a chairlift. It was such a beautiful day, and she said, "Let's walk to the bottom of the mountain." And I said, "All right." And we were just walking along talking, having a wonderful time—and, there she was on the ground. I mean, just flat—just like that—and she passed out. And I mean, one second, we were talking; and, the next second, she's gone. I mean flat. Then, she's right back up. And I said, "Joyce, what happened?" And she said, "I turned my ankle." And just like that, God turned out her lights, and put her on the ground. Why? Well, to protect her, and to keep her from putting her weight on that ankle. And in a few moments, the swelling went down. You see, that was God's mechanizing. But suppose that she could not have felt that pain. She would have continued to walk and to strain those ligaments, and so forth.

### B. Pain Has a Unifying Purpose

You see, there is a protecting purpose in pain. Not only is there a protecting purpose, but, you know, there is a unifying purpose in pain. You know that a body comes to the aid of the other members of the body? Or, the other members of the body come to the aid of the hurt member of the body.

I've used this illustration before. But if you've ever been hanging pictures for your wife, and you hit your thumb with a hammer—you know, when it really hurts—do you know what you did? I know what you did. I wasn't even there; but, I know what you did. You grabbed it. That's the first thing that you do. Just like that. I know the second thing that you do. You stuck it in your mouth. You stuck it there. And I know the third thing that you did: You did a little dance just like this. That's right. You did all of that.

Why? Because the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians 12, verse 26, that "*whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it*" (1 Corinthians 12:26). And pain is God's

way of showing us that we need one another. Did you know that, if I couldn't feel any pain, I would never know my need of you, and you would never know your need of me? But the Bible has put us together where we suffer, and where we need one another, and where we come to the aid of one another. And by the way, this same doctor, Dr. Paul Brand, who works with these lepers, said, "I can tell the health of the body by the way it acts and responds to pain."

By the way, what does that tell us about our church? The health of this church can be seen by the way it takes care of its aged, its children, those from broken homes, those who are in the hospitals, and those who hurt. A healthy body responds to pain.

### C. Pain Has a Correcting Purpose

My dear friend, in pain there is a protecting purpose; in pain there is a unifying purpose; and, in pain—none of us want it—but there is a correcting purpose.

Not only is there a protecting—there is also a correcting purpose. That is, he went on to say—Dr. Brand—that lepers who smoke cigarettes many times burn their hands, because they could not feel the heat of the cigarette burning right on down, and they continue to smoke the cigarette down past the place that it ought to be discarded. And as far as I'm concerned, it ought to be discarded before it is ever lit. But that's not the point. There is a correcting purpose in pain.

You see, listen. Why did God allow pain, to begin with? There was no pain until there was sin. And when sin came into the world, pain came into the world. And there, in Genesis 3, verse 18, God said to Adam, and God said to Eve, concerning this world, "*Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee*" (Genesis 3:18).

Yours is going to be thorny world. Briars are going to be at your feet. God said—listen: "Cursed is the ground for your sake" (Genesis 3:17). Not for your punishment, but for your benefit—for your sake. Why? Simply this: The worst thing that could happen to you would be for you to be wounded, sick, hurt, and feel no pain. Because then, the corrective, protective purpose would be in vain. One of these days, God is going to remove all pain; there will be no more sorrow—no crying, no dying, no sigh, no groan, and no moan. But not until the last vestige of sin is removed from the enemy. When that sin is removed, then God can remove that pain; but not up until then. Because, my dear friend, the pain that we feel, the heartache—not just as individuals, but humanity—the inexplicable, sometimes undeserved, unreasonable pain is God's way of saying that, "You live in a world that is chaotic, that is cursed. This is not what I created; this is not what I wanted; and, this is not what we'll do." God says that, "Because of sin, you suffer; but, I want you to know that, because you suffer, I suffer also."

You know the problem with our generation? When we feel the pain, rather than coming to the Savior, we cry for a sedative. I mean, we have a generation, today, that

says, "Keep away from pain, at all cost; whatever it is, just get rid of it."

That's why kids are on drugs. It doesn't matter if they are from the ghettos, or whether they are from an affluent neighborhood—there's the pain of insecurity, of loneliness, of worthlessness, and not being able to keep up and cope. And so they are taking a sedative. And when these kids get on drugs, you say, "Why don't they honor their father and their mother?" They don't care what their father and mother think anymore; they just don't care. Just like a generation today that's on drugs, they don't care what their Heavenly Father thinks.

The same thing is true about liquor: people trying to kill the pain. They speak of a drunk, and they say, "He's feeling no pain." He doesn't want to feel the pain. Rather than healing the disease, we are just trying to kill the pain.

The reason so many have affairs—a 45-year-old man is running around with a girl in her teens—why? Because, he's so insecure; he's so frustrated; he's so afraid that he's losing his manhood. He's trying to prove himself. It's not love. It's an inward pain—a sedative.

Do you know the biggest narcotic, the biggest sedative? It's television. That's why we watch so much television. Because, we don't want to think. Do you know what the word *amuse* means—*a-muse*? To *muse* is to think. A *museum* is a place you go to think. If you put the *alpha*, the *negative*, in front—*a-muse*—it means, "not to think." People are amusing themselves; they put their brain in neutral, sit there in front of that thing until their eyes get big as coconuts, and their brain the size of a pea, because they don't want to think.

These kids going down the street with a ghetto blaster on their shoulders—they don't want to think; they can't bear to think. It is so painful, that they say, "Give me a sedative."

### **III. God Is a Saving God**

The scars of Jesus Christ, that He bears eternally, tell us, first of all, that He is a suffering God. Secondly, they tell us that He is a sympathizing God. But thirdly—and, thank God for this—those scars tell us that He is a saving God—a saving God. In Zechariah 13:6, they will say, "*What are these wounds in thine hands?*" He'll say, "That's where I was wounded in the house of my friends" (Zechariah 13:6). What does that refer to? Isaiah 53, verse 5, says, "*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities*" (Isaiah 53:5). He—this suffering God, this sympathizing God—took our pain, took our shame, took our blame, took our suffering, took our sins, and carried them to the cross. In agony and in blood, He died, He was wounded; and, with His rich, red, and royal blood, He purchased our salvation. Those scars tell us that He—Jesus—is the saving God.

*"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isaiah 1:18). Because he suffered, bled, died, and paid the sin debt. He didn't have to. But He loved us so much.

How many parents do we have here today? Let me see your hands, if you are a parent. I want to ask you parents a question: If you were off on a vacation somewhere, having a wonderful time, and one of your children were hit by an automobile, or put in incredible pain of some kind, would you want to know about it, even if it ruined your vacation? Of course, you would. Why would you take yourself away from there, when you could say, "Hey, don't tell me about it; I just want to be happy"? Could God have stayed in Heaven and just been happy? No.

My dear friends, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those that fear Him" (Psalm 103:13). The Bible tells me that, "*When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up*" (Psalm 27:10). You see, my dear friends, He doesn't want to be oblivious to your pain. He has entered into your pain. You would want to be with that child who is hurting, I'll tell you, for one reason: Even if you couldn't help them, you'd want to hurt with them, even if it didn't do any good; how much more, if you could come and suffer, and do some good to relief their suffering.

We had our firstborn to come into the world. My pastor said to me, "Adrian, before you have your own children, you think of the great love of Jesus dying for your sins. But after you have your own children, you think of the great love of the Father sending His Son." Isn't that true?

I remember when our little boy had to have surgery. And I was in seminary. I had never been around surgery before. They took that little baby, not a year old, and those doctors wanted to take him away from me, put him on that thing, and wheel him out. Boy, I looked over that whole crew real hard. They are going to take my baby, and I can't even be in there to stand by. And when they put that little guy on that cot to wheel him out, I cannot tell you what that did to my heart. I thought, "Dear God, if I could just take him off, and if I could just get up there; God, if I could just get there, so he wouldn't feel it—so I could feel it."

You see, that's what the cross is all about. That great eminent theologian Phil Donahue told about how he had become disillusioned with Christianity. And here's what Phil Donahue had to say. He asked this question—he said, "How could an all-knowing, all-loving God allow His Son to be murdered on a cross in order to redeem my sins? If God the Father is so all-loving, why didn't He come down and go to Calvary?" The answer, of course, is that is just what He did. My friend, the Bible says, in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 19, "*that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.*" And when God the Son suffered, God the Father suffered. And God the Son and God the Father suffered, because we are sinners, and we suffer. Yes, He could have washed His hands

of the whole mess. But thank God, He didn't. "In all our afflictions, He was afflicted" (Isaiah 63:9).

## Conclusion

He's a suffering God, because He's a sympathizing God; because He's a saving God. I want you to listen to me now. If you have a wound today, bring your wound to Jesus. His joy is not meant to kill the pain, but to help you to bear the pain. Bring your wounds to Jesus. And if He has already healed your wounds, use your scars for Jesus. The Apostle Paul said, in Galatians chapter 6, verse 17: "*I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus*" (Galatians 6:17). Paul said, "I am using these scars for Jesus Christ." Use your scars for Jesus.

Do you know what a scar is? It is a wound that's healed. My dear friend, when Jesus Christ has healed you, He will use your scars to heal others.

I talked about our little boy that had an operation. We have another little son that's in Heaven. He died on a Mother's Day—on Sunday afternoon, after I had preached. Our hearts were crushed. We turned to the Word of God. And God spoke to us out of the book of Corinthians, where it says, in 2 Corinthians 1, verse 3: "*Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort*" (2 Corinthians 1:3). God spoke to me. That was the first verse I read after I had come from the hospital without our little baby. God said, "Adrian, I am going to heal you, and then let you use your scars as a testimony that the wounds will heal." Since that time, I have met so many mothers who have lost their little babies, and I said, "Would you call Joyce? Let Joyce talk to you." And I have seen Joyce use her scars to minister to others.

Jesus used His scars to minister to Thomas. He said, "Thomas, the scar is a wound that is healed. I have been raised from the dead." You may hurt. But come to Jesus, and, in His timing, He will turn every hurt to a hallelujah. He will turn every tear to a prayer. He'll turn your Calvary to Easter, and your scars will remain as a memorial of His grace. Let's pray.

One more time, dear friend: If you are suffering, I want to tell you that He's been there, and He knows, and He cares. And if you are lost, I want to remind you that the scars of Jesus tell us that your sin debt has been paid in full. Don't just try to block out the pain with some sedative, and, at the same time, lock out the Savior. But come to Jesus. He loves you, and He is reaching out to you with a nail-scarred hand—a nail-scarred hand.

While heads are bowed, and eyes are closed, let me ask you this question: How many in this building today would say, "Pastor Rogers, I have received Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior; He has forgiven my sins; God's Spirit bears witness with

my Spirit that I am a child of God; and, I know, by the grace of God, that, if I should die right now, I would go to Heaven; I know that, I know that I'm saved"? Let me see your hands; hold them up. Thank you for that. Let them down. Now if you couldn't lift your hand, I'm praying that today you will give your heart to Jesus Christ.

Father God, I pray that many, many will say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

# The Scars of the Ministry

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 13, 1988**

**Main Scripture Text: Zechariah 13:6; Galatians 6:17**

*"And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."*

ZECHARIAH 13:6

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## Introduction

Now tonight, I want you to take God's Word and I want you to find two passages of Scriptures, one in the Old Testament and one in the New: Zechariah chapter 13 and verse 6 in the Old Testament; Galatians chapter 6 and verse 17 in the New Testament. And as we ordain these two young ministers tonight, I want to talk to you about this subject, "The Scars of the Ministry, the Scars of the Ministry."

Zechariah chapter 13 and verse 6 speaks of the time when our Lord Jesus Christ will come back to this earth and the chosen people, the sons of Abraham, will see the Lord Jesus Christ. The scales will fall from their eyes. And Zechariah prophesies something very wonderful. Zechariah chapter 13 and verse 6: "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." Then the other Scripture in the New Testament, Galatians chapter 6 and verse 17: "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks"—the stigmata, the wounds, the scars—"of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Have you ever made a trip to Canada, Europe, Mexico, the Caribbean, some foreign land, South America? If you're like most tourists, one thing you did is you bought a souvenir or some souvenirs, things probably when you got home you wondered why you bought them. You know, you bring a lacquered armadillo from Mexico or something,

and you keep it a while, for a little while and then out it goes or up in the attic it goes. These are souvenirs.

Our Lord Jesus Christ visited this earth. And when He went back to heaven, Jesus carried some souvenirs of His visit to planet Earth, and they were scars; scars in His hands and in His feet He carried with Him to heaven. Someone has said the only man-made thing in heaven are the scars of Jesus Christ. We made those scars in His hands, and He carried them with Him, and He will keep them. An amazing fact, but He will keep those scars for all eternity. Zechariah says when He comes again, after He has been in heaven now for two millenniums, when He comes again, He will be recognized by the wounds in His hands—an amazing prophecy.

Now there are several things I want you to learn, Bill and Bob. But not just you, all of us. I want us to think of the scars of the ministry. But before we do, I want us to think of the scars of the Lord Jesus Christ. What do those scars tell us? What do those scars teach us?

## I. He Is a Suffering God

Well, in the first place, when I think of those wounds in the hands of my Savior, they tell me that Jesus suffered. He is a suffering God. Now today, the problem of suffering causes a lot of people great difficulty. As a matter of fact, it has made agnostics out of some people. Some people say, "I cannot figure it out. If God is a good God, and God is all-powerful, why is there so much pain and suffering in this world if God is love and God is all powerful?" Now they go through a rationale like this: Perhaps God is love, but He doesn't have any power to do anything about the trouble. They say, "Well, that would make a weak God. He wouldn't be worthy of worship." And they say, "Well, perhaps God has the power, but He just doesn't care." That makes a cruel God still not worthy or worship. And then somebody says, "Well, maybe He doesn't have any power and He doesn't have any love. Maybe there is no God, no God at all." Because people are trying to figure out this problem of pain.

Go over here to the hospitals. Read the newspapers. Feel pain in your own body. Have heartache and suffering and pain in your family and you will ask this question: Why? Why? And I want to tell you that's a very real problem, a very real question: why do people suffer. But I can give you a better question than that. I can give you a harder question than that. The question is not why does God allow men to suffer, but why does God allow Himself to suffer? Did you know that God suffers? Let me give you some Scripture.

Isaiah chapter 42 and verse 14. God describes Himself, and He says, "I cry like a travailing woman." They say that the most intense pain that human beings know anything about is the labor pain when a woman is coming forth with a child. And God

describes Himself, and God says, "I," speaking of Himself, "I cry like a travailing woman."

Let me give you another verse. Isaiah chapter 63 and verse 9. God looked at the children of Israel, and God said, "In all their affliction, he was afflicted." When they were afflicted, God was afflicted. Almighty God afflicted? That's what the verse says.

Jeremiah 31, verse 20. Listen to this. "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him..." Do you know what that means, "my bowels are troubled for him?" Any of you who have teenage boys who have broken your heart know that feeling in the pit of your stomach, that pain. If you've had a child that you would die for to break your heart, you know the pain that God spoke of when He spoke of His dear son, Ephraim.

Hosea chapter 11 and verse 8. He says, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me..." That means my heart is just churned upside down in pain.

Can God suffer? He does suffer. And think about it. Doesn't a father suffer when his children suffer? Isn't that the meaning of the story of the prodigal son when the prodigal son went to a far country? Who suffered most, the prodigal son or the prodigal son's father? I believe the prodigal son's father suffered the most.

Did you know that God can be grieved? The Bible commands us in Ephesians, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit, grieve not the Holy Spirit." To grieve is to suffer. The Holy Spirit of God can suffer. By the way, this is a great verse to use for your Jehovah's Witness friends who don't believe in the personality of the Holy Spirit, who believe that the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is only some sort of a force emanating from God. But, my dear friend, a force cannot feel. A person can feel. A person can grieve. The Bible says we're to grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.

Does not the head suffer when the body suffers? Christ is the head. We are His body. And when we hurt, He hurts. He hurts. Don't you understand that?

When Saul was persecuting those Christians on the road to Damascus, He met the Lord Jesus. And Jesus said to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecuteth thou me?" Saul might have said, "I don't know who you are, but I'm not persecuting you. I'm persecuting these Christians." But you get the point. To persecute the church is to persecute Christ, for He is the head and we're the body. God can suffer. God does suffer. And so, dear friend, the scars of Jesus, the scars of Jesus—they were made by wounds, and wounds tell us that He is a suffering God.

## **II. He Is a Sympathetic God**

But I'll tell you what else the scars of Jesus tell us. They tell us not only is He a suffering God, but they tell us He is a sympathetic God. Not only does He suffer, but He cares. Now here's the key verse—Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 15: "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Jesus is touched. He understands. He knows what pain is.

Why do people bring back souvenirs when they go somewhere? They say, "Look, I've been there. I've been there. This is proof that I have been there." My dear friend, those scars in the hands of Jesus up in the glory are one way of saying, "I have been there." Jesus wept when He was here on earth because He knew the suffering that people have gone through and will go through. Now He didn't have to come to earth to know it. He knows all things. But He came to earth that we might know that He knows it, that we might know that He knows it. It makes it more real to us that He was here in a human body. The Bible says He was moved with compassion. What great love He had, that He was willing to come and suffer so that He might be the sympathizing Savior.

The Chinese, in the Chinese language, have a symbol for love, which is the deepest, strongest, purest type of love, and it is two Chinese characters mingled together. One is the character for pain and the other is the character for love. And these are mingled together for what we might call pain/love, pain/love.

Now He, the Lord God, suffers. And He is the suffering God, that He might be the sympathizing God.

Now God could choose not to suffer, and God could stop all suffering obviously. God could say, "I'm God. I won't suffer anymore." Couldn't He say that? He's God. Sure. And couldn't God just say, "There'll be no more suffering in the world?" If He wanted to, He could. Why then doesn't He remove the suffering, first of all, from human beings? I'll tell you why. It is because He loves us too much—too much.

I want you to listen to this statement: "If I had the power to eliminate human pain, I would not exercise that right." Who said that? "If I had the power to eliminate pain, I would not exercise that right." You know who said that? A medical doctor said that, and imminent physician, a surgeon. Dr. Paul Brand said, "If I had the power to eliminate pain, I would not exercise that right." Now God didn't say that, but God does have the power, and God will not exercise that right. Why? Because pain's value is too great, this doctor went on to say. "Rather, I would lend all my energies in doing all I can when that pain turns to suffering." You see, really, pain is proof of God's love.

After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God said to Adam and Eve, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." Not for your punishment, but for your sake. Because I love you, thorns and thistles are going to be there.

### A. The Protecting Purpose of Pain

You see, what is the purpose of pain? Well, number one, there is the protecting purpose of pain. Dr. Paul Brand worked with lepers. And he said that lepers lose the ability to feel pain. And many times the lepers would walk. And as they would walk in long journeys, they would actually wear off parts of the bottom of their feet. When you and I walk, we're constantly shifting our weight. If we walk a long time, we start out, we'll walk on our toes. And then, after a while we'll go back and we'll walk on our heels. And then we'll walk on the outside and the inside of our foot. Our feet are constantly adjusting. But the lepers just simply continue to walk, and they wear out their flesh. If a leper's leg is hurt, the leper does not limp. Have you ever hurt your foot? You limp. Why? It's to favor that pain so that you don't hurt it. But he can't feel any pain, so he strides right on and makes the wound worse.

There's a mechanism built into your leg that is there, built into your ankle, that if you turn your ankle, immediately all of the muscles in your leg relax and you go down. I saw that happen to Joyce. Joyce and I were walking down a mountainside just as happy as we could be. I mean, we were having a wonderful time. Now Joyce and I were walking down a mountainside. And it was beautiful; I mean, just absolutely beautiful. And I looked over and there she is flat on the ground. I mean, bang, just out just like that. And I thought, *My goodness, what has happened to her?* What she had done was to turn her ankle. And when she turned her ankle, her entire leg gave way and she went down—just like that. Now that's a reflex mechanism that God has put into your body. Your, your, your thigh and your calf go limp so that you will not make that sprain any worse and you'll not tear those ligaments. You see, pain has a protecting purpose. One of the worst things that could happen would be for that protecting purpose to be taken away from you.

### B. The Unifying Purpose of Pain

I'll tell you what else pain has. Pain has a unifying purpose. When you hurt a part of your body, the rest of the body comes to its aid, doesn't it? Classic example: You hit your thumb with a hammer, you grab it. That's the first thing. Second thing you do is you pop it in your mouth and suck on it, don't you? That's right. Third thing you do, you do a little dance just like that. Now, why? I don't know what the dance is good for, but it helps. The entire body—the entire body—comes to the aid of that hurt part. Now that's what Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 26: "When one member suffers, all the members suffer with it."

You see, there's the unifying purpose of pain. We're drawn together by pain. We certainly are. We learn to sympathize with one another.

John Wesley's mother was asked, "Which one of your eleven children do you love the most?" You know what she said? She said, "I love the one who's sick until he's well, and the one who is away until he's home."

You see, what pain does, it just brings us together. But a wolf that has a leg that is caught in a trap and maybe then frostbitten will gnaw that leg off. He can't feel any pain. He loses all sense of self-unity.

Dr. Brand went on to say, "I can read the health of the physical body by noting how well it responds to pain." I wonder what that says about our church, how well we respond to the pain of the elderly and the battered children and the poor and the shut-out and the shut-in and these people. When you learn to respond to pain, it's a sign that the body is healthy, that it can still feel pain. There's a unifying purpose of pain.

### C. The Correcting Purpose of Pain

There's the correcting purpose of pain. When you put your hand on a stove, the pain says, "Move that hand. There's something wrong down there." You see, dear friend, the universe has a disease, and that disease is sin, and God will not remove the pain until the last vestige of sin is gone. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." There is a protecting, unifying, correcting purpose to pain.

And there's more than one kind of pain. There's physical pain. There's also emotional pain. There's also spiritual pain. Now we live in a generation today that doesn't like pain at all, so what we try to do is to kill the pain with sedatives, drugs. That's why so many people are on drugs. Many people get hooked on drugs, just trying to kill pain.

When I had my surgery back in 1980, when I was attacked by that vicious gall bladder, they put me in the hospital. And when they got ready to go in there and take that gall bladder out, they began to inject me with some stuff. And, friend, I tell you, after a while I didn't care whether they took it out or not. Make any difference to me. I mean, I've never had an experience like that. Fine, go ahead, whatever you want to do. Now I was prayed up anyway, but, you know, there's just something about it.

Let me tell you why these kids get on drugs. They're trying to kill the pain of a bad relationship with their parents. But when they get on drugs, I want to tell you, mister, they don't care what you think as their dad. They don't care what their mom thinks. They really don't care. They couldn't care less. People get drunk. People have an affair to kill the pain of loneliness. And many people are addicted to television. It's the biggest sedative of all. They're trying to kill that emotional pain by living in a make-believe world.

But, you see, our Lord knows that pain is a tool of God. And, therefore, He would not stop us from suffering. He would not eliminate pain, even if He could, and He can. But rather than that, He sympathizes with us.

Now listen. He is a suffering God. People get drunk. People have an affair to kill the pain of loneliness. And many people are addicted to television. It's the biggest sedative of all. They're trying to kill that emotional pain by living in a make-believe world.

But, you see, our Lord knows that pain is a tool of God. And, therefore, He would not

stop us from suffering. He would not eliminate pain, even if He could, and He can. But rather than that, He sympathizes with us.

### **III. He Is a Saving God**

Now listen. He is a suffering God. He is a sympathizing God. I'll tell you something else those wounds tell us. They tell us not only does He suffer, and not only does He care, but they also tell us that He saves. He is a saving God.

Do you know what a scar is? A scar is a wound that has healed. Listen to this Scripture: Isaiah 53, verse 6: "But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities..." And the scars of those wounds are now in heaven. He did not have to suffer, but He chose to suffer. He invaded our suffering so He could bear our sins and heal our wounds. And the Bible says, "With his stripes we are healed." He is a saving God.

I want to ask you a question. Think about it, those of you who are parents. How many parents are here tonight? Let me see your hand. Parents. Okay. Great number. If your child, who lived in another city, was suffering great pain, had you rather not know about it so you wouldn't have to suffer also? I mean, tonight, for example, you might be looking forward to going to a restaurant with some friends. Would you rather not know about it so it wouldn't upset your meal? Or would you rather know about it so you could suffer with them? I don't even have to answer the question out loud. I know the answer. If you are a parent, if your heart beats like mine, you would say, "If my child suffers, I want to suffer with them." Isn't that strange? Isn't that strange?

We ask the question, why does God choose to suffer? Because He loves us so. Because He loves us so. And He chooses to suffer.

I heard about a boy who was a terrible boy, a rounder, a bounder, and he'd gotten into terrible trouble. And over and over again his dad had gotten him out of trouble, and he got back in trouble. Finally, someone said to him, "Mister, if that were my son, I'll tell you what I would do," and he told about how he'd turn him out and how he'd do this and how he'd do that. And the man said, "Yes," he said, "I know how you feel." And he said, "If he were your son, that's what I'd do. But he's not your son. He's my son. He's my son. He is my son."

And God suffers when we suffer. You see, Phil Donahue couldn't understand this. Phil Donahue was expressing his unbelief, and he was telling how he had become disillusioned with Christianity, and here's what he said. He asked this question: "How could an all-knowing, all-loving God allow His Son to be murdered on a cross in order to redeem my sins? If God the Father is so all-loving, why didn't He come down and go to Calvary?" The answer, of course, is that's exactly what He did. That is exactly what what He did. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

My dear friend, He is a suffering God. He is a sympathizing God. And He is a saving God.

When my first son was born, my pastor said something to me I'll never forget. He rejoiced with me in the birth of our son, Steve. He said, "Adrian, you're going to learn something now about God you've never known before. Before you had a son, you thought so much of the love that Jesus had when He died upon that cross." And I still thank Jesus my Savior for that love. But he said, "After you've had a son of your own, you'll praise the Father all the more that He sent His Son to die for us." God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

Now what does all of this have to do with the ministry and these three men that we're ordaining? The apostle Paul said, "I bear in my body the scars, the stigmata of the Lord Jesus Christ." I want to tell these preachers, but I'll tell anybody that if you make up your mind to serve the Lord Jesus, you'll have some scars. Colossians 1, verse 24 says, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh." The apostle Paul said in Philippians 3, verse 10: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings." Galatians 4:17: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ."

They were challenging Paul. They said, "Paul, you're no minister. You're no apostle. What right do you have?" And Paul said, "I'll tell you what right I have. I bear in my body the scars of the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't bother me about that any more. Don't let any man bother me about that." Paul had his scars that validated his ministry. And I want to tell you men that your greatest ministry may be your scars.

Do you remember Thomas, doubting Thomas? Doubting Thomas said, "I'll not believe unless I see the scars in His hands." Remember that? And Jesus said, "All right, Thomas, there they are. There they are." And I'll tell you there may be some people who will not believe until they see the scars in your life. You see, the Bible says that, "God comforts us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort others with the same comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

My wife has some scars. They're deep in her heart. We lost a little baby early in our ministry, a little baby boy, precious boy named Philip died. And I saw my wife's heart and my heart cut so deep, but I saw it heal. And thank God there's a scar there. And I've seen Joyce with those scars minister to so many other mothers who've lost little babies. I've been in the hospital, and people will come in, and that little mother will sit there with her head down, won't even look up. Pastors will read Scriptures, and friends will hug, but Joyce will come in, put her arm around her, and say, "I know how you feel. We've got a little boy in heaven." She'll look up, say, "You do? You know." And God comforts us, that we may be able to comfort others.

Oh, my dear friend, your scars may be your greatest ministry. Listen. If you're wounded, bring your wounds to Jesus and let Him heal them. And then, use your scars

for Jesus and heal others. Bring your wounds to Jesus and let Him heal them. Paul said, "I bear in my body the stigmata, the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Back in olden days, when knights went out on shining, on white horses wearing shining armor to battle, they had a king, a leader. These knights would pledge their allegiance to their king. And each one of them wanted to be nearest the king in the battle. These were warrior kings. And they would count it a great honor to be alongside their king, always there because the hottest fight and the more arrows came to where the king was. They wanted to be near the king, the place of greatest danger. And if the battle was victorious, they would come back to a battle celebration in the castle. And the king, as they talked about the battle, would show his scars. And then others who were there with the king standing by his side would also show their scars. How ashamed at that time the cowards must have been!

## Conclusion

I think that some of us will be embarrassed when we get to heaven because we don't have any scars. In the last several years, I've taken some slings, some shots, some arrows, and, oh, how it's made me fill with joy! I was afraid I might get through without any. I've had something to offer to Jesus that I never had before. And, oh, I don't hold myself up as a martyr, but I've suffered that much.

Amy Carmichael wrote these words. I want you to listen. Amy Carmichael, by the way, labored for fifty years in China as a missionary. Here's what she said. I want you, Bill and Bob, to listen to it. "No wound? No scar? Yet as the master, shall the servant be. And pierced are the feet that follow me. But thine are whole. Can he have followed far who has no wound, no scar?" Someone else wrote these words: "Captain beloved, battle wounds were thine. Let me not wonder if some hurt be mine. Rather, O Lord, let my deep wonder be, that I may share a battle wound with thee."

When Jesus comes, they're going to say, "What are these wounds in your hand?" And He's going to say, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." And when I get to heaven, I'd like for Him to say to me, "Adrian, what are those wounds?" And I'd like to say, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Ray talked about being shot at down in El Salvador, but those bullets don't always miss. We've not yet resisted unto blood, but we may.

Our God is a suffering God, a sympathizing God, a saving God. What a Savior!

Let's pray. Would you, while heads are bowed, ask the Lord to forgive you for your selfishness, your indifference, your indolence? And would you say, "Lord Jesus, tonight, I place my hand in the nail-scarred hand by faith to follow wherever you lead"?

Father God, I pray tonight that you'll seal the message to our hearts in the holy name of Jesus. Amen.